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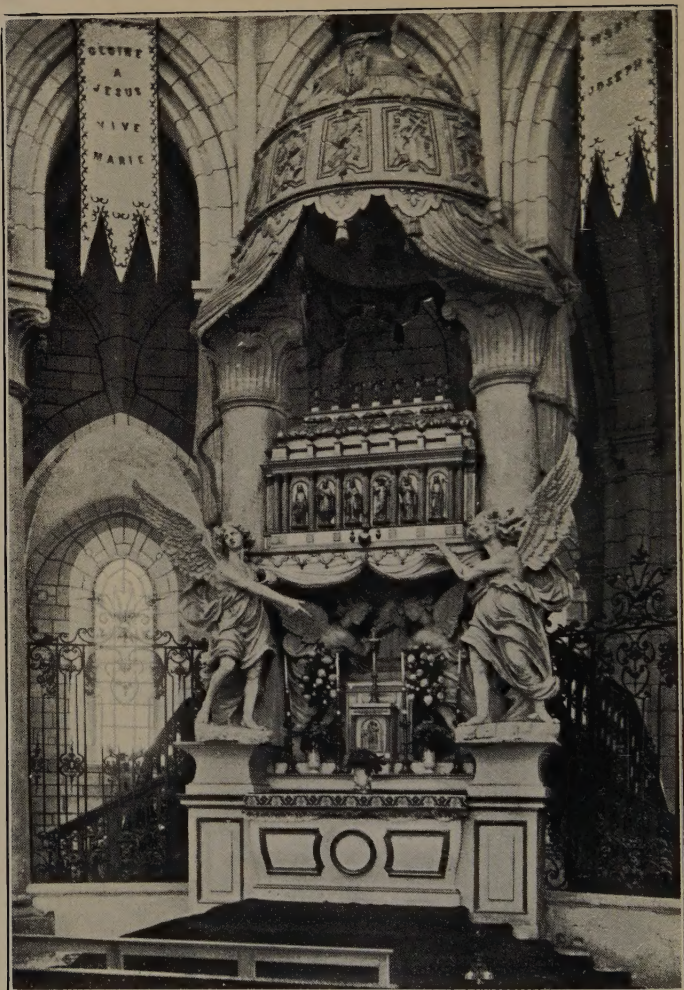
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EDMUND RICH
ARCHBISHOP AND SAINT



PONTIGNY.

THE RELIQUARY OF ST. EDMUND.

Frontispiece.

Edmund Rich.

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EDMUND RICH ARCHBISHOP AND SAINT

BY
Michael Robert
M. R. NEWBOLT, 1874

LONDON
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S.P.C.K. LONDON

PREFACE

THE authorities I have used for the events of Edmund's life are *The Life of St. Edmund of Canterbury*, by Wilfrid Wallace, D.D., O.S.B. (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1893), *St. Edmund of Abingdon*, by Frances Paravacini (Burns and Oates), and *St. Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, His Life as told by Old English Writers*, arranged by Bernard Ward (Sands & Co., 1903).

Father Bernard Ward gives translations from the original documents, which are unusually plentiful. The first of his authorities is Matthew Paris, the Benedictine of St. Albans, author of the *Chronica Majora* and the *Historia Anglorum*; Matthew Paris was writing when Edmund was Archbishop. Other monastic chroniclers quoted by Father Ward are the Oseney Chronicles and the chronicles of Lanercost in Cumberland, both Augustinians. He also gathers references to St. Edmund from *The Gervase Chronicle*, written by a monk of Canterbury. The original biographers of the Saint were Robert Rich, his brother, Bertrand, his chamberlain, afterwards Prior of Pontigny, Robert Bacon, a Dominican,

probably an uncle of the more famous Roger Bacon, and Matthew Paris. More than four different contemporary lives exist to-day, which are quoted from by Father Ward, but it is not certain how far they correspond with these four original biographies.

I have also borrowed from Dr. Rashdall's great work on *Medieval Universities*, Mr. A. F. Leach's book on *Schools of Medieval England*, Mr. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, *Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln*, by F. S. Stevenson, M.P., and other authors quoted in the text.

Unfortunately *A Medieval Hall*, by A. B. Emden, was not yet published till this book was in print. Those who are interested in St. Edmund will find new material in that volume.

M. R. N.

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Edmund, 1170-1240.

Richard of Chichester, 1197-1253

EDMUND RICH

CHAPTER I

EDMUND'S PLACE IN HISTORY

HISTORY has dealt hardly with St. Edmund of Canterbury ; the average well-read man has scarcely heard of him, the student remembers him as a thirteenth-century ecclesiastic connected with the early days of the University of Oxford and as an Archbishop who died in exile, a standing instance of a man too saintly to be practical.

But history is apt to be coloured by the preconceived ideas of the historian, and we must occasionally be struck by the ruthless manner in which we have reversed the verdict of antiquity. Our forefathers, for instance, venerated St. Edward the Confessor, whereas we are taught to regard him as a rather fatuous figure cowering between the dominating personalities of Canute, the Scandinavian empire-builder, and William of Normandy, that stark exponent of the policy of blood and iron. "The holy but imbecile Edward," Professor Maitland has called him in

his book *Social England*. King after king made oath in Westminster Abbey to observe the Laws of the Confessor ; the modern historian objects that "so far as we know, Edward never made a law." Even if he did not, it is plain that the nation felt that his memory stood for mercy and righteousness, and forced king after king to swear to imitate him. In matters like this the modern historian is backing his own opinion against the verdict of a people, and those English of the past into whose labours we enter and from whose stock we spring would certainly be surprised at some of our estimates. They put up with most of their monarchs as necessary evils too strong to be resisted, but their heroes they chose for themselves. They would have found it difficult to imagine a History of England which did not give a place of honour to St. Thomas of Canterbury, the Archbishop who died in the cause of freedom, and there were other men, now half-forgotten, whose names they inscribed on the roll of honour of the Church, expecting them to be held worthy of remembrance till the end of time.

Edward the meek king and Edmund the scholar were both of them, in their different generations, called upon to play their parts in high places as saints in a world that was only partly Christian.

They lived as lambs in the midst of wolves, and the public opinion that makes history, and

tells us what to admire in it, unfortunately prefers a good wolf to any lamb.

We still retain that philosophy of life and scale of values which set all Europeans at each other's throats in the episode of 1914-1918.

Any school history tells us who built the Tower of London, but we have forgotten the peaceful men who built our cathedrals. We know who won the victory of Agincourt, but the men who founded our Universities remain anonymous. When our Lord said "The meek shall inherit the earth" He did not promise that those who enter on their inheritance shall hold their names in honour.

Edmund Rich was too uncompromisingly Christian for his contemporaries; that is why he died in exile. Yet only seven years after his death he was canonised. Now canonisation generally meant a response to the demand of the inarticulate masses of ordinary people; it was, in fact, almost the only way in which the popular voice could make itself heard. Saint Edmund's exile showed what the rulers thought of him; his elevation to the altars of the Church expressed the people's verdict; it was the men who marched in the armies rather than those who made the armies march, the people who filled the churches rather than the lords who lived in castles, that compelled the world to venerate after his death a man who while he was alive had stood in

opposition to so many vested interests and to the forces which sought to dominate the realm.

No doubt such canonisations as his were to some extent political. Men saw in St. Edmund a character of heroic sanctity, but they saw more than that, for those were days when a man's religion claimed to guide his politics, his intellectual attitude, and his relation to social questions and the affairs of daily life. In these matters both England and France felt that this Archbishop had stood for what was right and true as the champion of the best aspirations of the age, and surely it is possible that they who knew the man himself and lived in the world in which he passed his strenuous life were in a better position to judge his character and worth than we. This is my chief apology for writing of him.

There is one circumstance which bridges the seven centuries between him and ourselves. Four other Archbishops of Canterbury—Augustine, Dunstan, Anselm, and Thomas—have been canonised, but only St. Edmund, the last Archbishop to be called a saint, has left relics which have been venerated continuously down to the present day. At Pontigny, about one hundred miles south of Paris off the main line to Lyons, in the church that was once a Cistercian Abbey founded by our English Stephen Harding, his body, robed in the vestments of the Archbishop, is still visible through the glass front of a gilded

reliquary above the altar in the apse. We are told that he was a man just under six feet in height, with a Roman nose, beautiful hands and small feet, for his body was inspected and measured on the occasion of a pilgrimage in 1874; and it is claimed that an English boy was healed by these relics in 1871 from serious injuries received at football. Till they were recently expelled by the French Law of Associations, the Fathers of St. Edmund, an order dedicated to his memory, had the charge of his shrine, and in England his name is



ST. EDMUND, FROM AN EARLY MS.

kept alive by the dedication of St. Edmund Hall in Oxford and by the Roman Catholic College of St. Edmund, Old Hall. There are several good Roman Catholic lives of him, but hardly any Anglican ones.

Edmund of Abingdon, as he was often called, is a character to be associated with the country of his birth. The charm of our English countryside lies in its history ; it has been made what it is by the men who lived in it and stamped their personality upon it ; visitors from our overseas Dominions feel this intangible atmosphere of the past even more strongly than we who live at home. Because of their human associations the little Cotswolds have a fascination which the Rocky Mountains cannot boast, and the murmur of Sandford lasher on the Thames has more to say to us than all the thunders of the Zambesi Falls. Moreover, our country is an inhabited home, not a museum. The Nile has history behind it, far more ancient than that of the Thames, but the temples and pyramids of Egypt are memorials of an age for ever dead, whereas England is still a birthplace and a nursery of men : the Thames flows through a land of living history, and its waters reflect the towers of churches which while they enshrine the past remain potentially the power-houses of the future. The Church which produced St. Edmund is still capable of bearing sons like him ; it is the Faith which made the

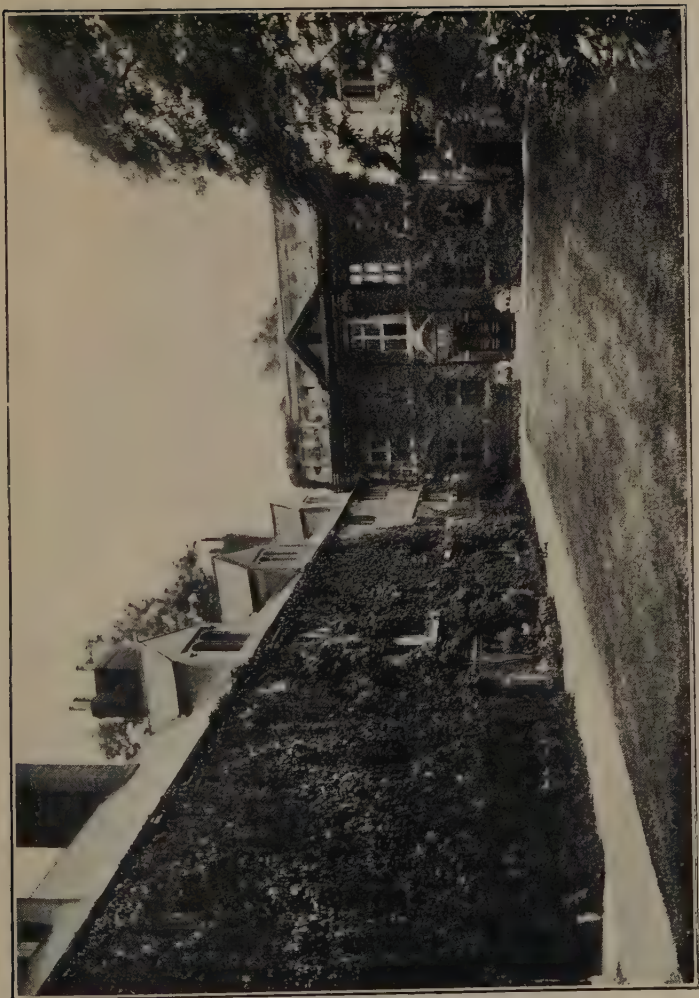
England that we know, and it is the Faith which will keep England from going the way of Babylon and Tyre.

Edmund was a typically English character, as native to our soil as the oak, the hawthorn, and the ash ; born in an English home, gifted with very English obstinacy, a solid, persevering, quiet sort of man. He is no such romantic figure as his beautiful contemporary St. Francis of Assisi, but he is the kind of character that the Church of England might produce at any period of its history.

There is, therefore, something a little sad in the contrast between the veneration of the saint at Pontigny and the forgetfulness of him at Abingdon, his birthplace, for the French Abbey where he lies was no more to him than a refuge into which he crept to die. It was England, not France, which reaped the fruits of his life's work. The reliquary above the Renaissance altar of Pontigny, upheld by vivacious seventeenth-century angels, all outstretched wings, gesticulating arms and half-bare legs, seems little in keeping with the typically English saint which it enshrines. Yet there is a significance in his last resting-place, and perhaps a token of hope as well, for he belongs to a time when the Faith in France and England was all one, and to an age far less provincially minded and more truly cosmopolitan than our own. We are coming to see that nothing

but the Faith can bind the world together, and the conversations at Malines may lead to the beginnings of better relations between us and our fellow-Christians across the Channel. Still, though St. Edmund's body rests in France, his spirit belongs to England, and specially to that short stretch of some six miles of the Thames valley which lies between Oxford and Abingdon. Whether one walks from his birthplace past Radley Park through Bagley Wood and so downhill to Hinksey, or takes the longer way on the river bank opposite Nuneham, Sandford, and Iffley, one can be certain that our saint must have known every inch of the way as boy and man, and it is pleasant to associate him with the places where he lived.

Of the Abingdon of his day not much remains except the little Norman Church of St. Nicholas outside the Abbey Gate. In this church was buried his mother, Mabel, with an inscription on her tomb proclaiming her as *Flos viduarum*, "The Flower of Widows, whose life was the pattern of virtues." The town he knew had grown up under the walls of one of the greatest and most ancient monasteries of England, but nothing remains of that glorious Abbey except a few not very interesting fragments rescued from the premises of a brewery. His name is attached to St. Edmund's Lane, a little street close to St. Helen's Church, where tradition says that



ST. EDMUND HALL, OXFORD.

Photo. by F. Frith.

facing p. 18.

he was born ; otherwise there is little to connect his birthplace with him except the strong continuity of character which such ancient places keep.

To Oxford the centuries have brought more changes even than to Abingdon. There were no colleges then, and where and how the hordes of students lived is difficult to realise. We think of the circuit of its walls as containing a huddle of timber or half-timber houses, and the only stone dwellings apart from its two monasteries were the houses of the Jews, who needed strong walls to protect their wealth. For there was an important Jewry in Oxford, and these aliens were the only bankers, usurers, and capitalists of the day. In 1244, soon after Edmund's death, the students sacked the Jewry, and in consequence the rate of interest to be charged to scholars was fixed by law at twopence in the pound per week.

The dominating features of Oxford in those days must have been the royal Palace of Beaumont, external to its walls, as the Palace of Westminster was to the walls of London, and the Castle whose mound and keep still lurk secluded behind the Police Station and the County Jail. These stand for things against which St. Edmund fought—the arbitrary force of kings and nobles and the darkness of oppression. The University to which he gave the best work of his life survives ;

the Castle is so dead that hardly anyone remembers it is there, and Beaumont Street shows no traces of the Palace which gave it its name.

From the Castle stretched the walls, encircling a small and crowded city of which Carfax was more or less the centre, and the High Street pretty well bisects its width. The further end of the walls stopped short of Magdalen, about a hundred yards from the Cherwell, at the East Gate just beyond the Schools. Near the Clarendon Buildings is a carved doorway, now part of a shop, surmounted by a battered representation of the Annunciation, said to mark the site of the little Chapel of St. Mary adjoining the city wall, which St. Edmund built and where he heard Mass daily ; but the actual doorway is much later than his date. Parts of the Cathedral existed then as the church of a House of Canons Regular dedicated to St. Frideswide and the repository of her shrine. St. Mary's Church stood where it stands to-day, but it was not the building which we know.

Beyond St. Thomas's Church, where now is a vague hinterland of gasworks and railway yards, rose the walls of Oseney Abbey, also a House of Canons Regular. Here was the aristocratic West End of the city, the Oxford of Parliaments and Church Councils, with its Castle and great Abbey mirrored in the streams of the divided Thames, "in a parcell of ground com-

passed about with Rivers," now a set of semi-canalised, ignoble waterways between the Upper River and the river below Folly Bridge.

One church alone remains in the neighbour-



BOSS IN THE VAULTING OF IFFLEY CHURCH

hood which has scarcely altered since St. Edmund's time. No one approaching the town from Abingdon can have failed to visit St. Mary's Church at Iffley on its gentle eminence above the river a mile below the city. In Edmund's day

that church was new, for it was built when he was a child, and the marvellous carvings of zodiacal signs, centaurs, strange creatures from the bestiaries and rows of bird-beak ornament which adorn its doorways and its sanctuary were then fresh from the carver's tool. There can be no doubt that here is one of the places in which St. Edmund prayed ; and he who in after years was to be associated with the building of Salisbury Cathedral may have learned to love good architecture in this small but lovely village church.

But chiefly one associates St. Edmund with the green ways between Oxford and Abingdon on the Berkshire side of the Thames. He was a little boy when his mother sent him to school at Oxford, and till he was over forty, except while he was at Paris, his connection with Oxford never ceased. He must have tramped those well-known paths many a time. If he could revisit the earth the Thames would still be much the same ; the green water meadows where the fritillaries grow, the woods that dip their roots in the stream at Nuneham, and the kingfishers darting in their deep green shadow would be quite familiar to his eye. Yet always, one imagines, whether playing as a child with other boys, or walking with a fellow-student in his later days, his mind tended to be absorbed with the things that are invisible rather than the Berkshire landscape or any aspect of the external scene.

He had always, from a child, the detachment of the scholar and the saint, moving through life like a man who lives aloof from it, absorbed in his own thoughts and finding reality in the world of spirit rather than the things of sense.

The schoolboy who wandered apart from his shouting playmates in the meadow and saw a vision of Christ Himself as another Boy, grew into the man who used to leave his pupils' fees untouched in the dust of his window-ledge for any passer-by to take. It seems characteristic of him that, making a prolonged retreat at Merton Abbey, he hardly knew by sight a brother who had waited on him for more than a year. Yet nothing could be further from the truth than to picture Edmund as a mere dreamer. Even in the thirteenth century other gifts than those of the ecstatic were required in an Archbishop, and the outstanding fact about him is that this poor scholar and tradesman's son rose to hold the highest position open to pure merit in all England. In his days to occupy the throne of Canterbury was to be the champion of the nation's rights, and Edmund, even if he lacked the force of a Becket or a Stephen Langton, had the courage to maintain their tradition by standing up unflinchingly against the capricious will of a Plantagenet king.

Edmund lived in a period prolific of saints, and they were saints of the Church Militant,

whose task it was to carry the Faith out of the shades left by the Dark Ages into our modern world. They laboured in days when the powers of darkness were still powerful and new life and new thoughts were bursting tumultuously from the prison of a great oppression. These saints of the thirteenth century belong to a kind of new dawn after what Mr. Chesterton calls "that dim but vast unrest of the twelfth century, when, as it has been finely said, Julian stirred in his sleep."

King John had something of the Apostate in his composition, and the Emperor Frederic the Second had yet more. Islam was still a danger without and the influence of Arabic culture was a more subtle peril within. It is worth remembering that both John and Frederic were suspected of a leaning to Mohammedanism, and that the fortress palace of the Alhambra began to rise in Granada about the same time that Salisbury Cathedral was being completed.

We think of the thirteenth century as an age of faith, and so indeed it was, but it was also an age when the Faith had to struggle for its very existence ; beliefs needed restatement, men's minds were flooded, as they are to-day, with a great access of new knowledge and almost submerged by a wave of scepticism. It was essentially a period of free thought and dangerous questionings. Our civilisation was coming to a new birth, and men who stood for Christian

ideals had to be prepared to suffer and dare all things for the cause of social righteousness.

When Edmund was born the martyrdom of St. Thomas was fresh in men's minds, and the memory of the Martyr was one of the forces which moulded and inspired his life. On the seal of Canterbury, which he used when he became Archbishop, was carved a figure of the Martyr falling beneath the soldiers' swords, with the legend "*Eadmundum moneat mors mea ne timeat.*" "May my death teach Edmund not to be afraid." Other Archbishops used a similar device, but it is clear that the example of Becket always overshadowed Edmund. His was not the brute courage of the fighting man, but that of the gentle nature which has always to be teaching itself not to be afraid; he wore the pallium of Canterbury as the successor to a martyr, continually bracing his own strength to meet a like death if need should arise.

Edmund's diocesan Bishop, who presumably gave him the sacrament of confirmation, was St. Hugh of Lincoln, in whose vast diocese Abingdon then lay. St. Hugh died when Edmund was a young scholar at Oxford. More significant and important to remember is the fact that St. Francis of Assisi saw the light within a few years of Edmund's birth and St. Dominic a few years later. Though he never met either of his two great contemporaries, the world in

which his later manhood was passed was deeply influenced already by their followers of the Black and Grey orders of Friars.

As an aged exile Edmund was met at Senlis by the Lady Blanche, Queen of the French, and at her entreaty gave his blessing to her sons. The eldest of these boys was St. Louis, afterwards the crusading king.

But the saint with whom he is most closely associated, in one of those friendships which are fragrant in history, was St. Richard of Droitwich, or de la Wych, the poor scholar of Oxford who became the poor Bishop of Chichester. So poor was Richard that as a student in Paris he shared with two others the joint possession of a single tunic, which each man wore in turn while the others stayed at home. Saint Richard, like Saint Edmund, was a typical product of the Universities and of that strange thirst for knowledge which no poverty could daunt. Like St. Edmund he travelled from Oxford to Paris ; thence he went to Bologna for the study of Canon Law, and returned to Oxford as its Chancellor. Both Robert Grosseteste and Edmund Rich, by that time Archbishop, sought his services ; he chose the call of Edmund, shared his life and labours, and eventually followed him to exile. After his master's death he entered a Dominican house at Orleans, where he was ordained priest and studied theology till he was recalled to

England and made Bishop of Chichester. When Henry III, that most unaccountable monarch, objecting furiously to his election, kept back the temporalities of his see, he tramped over Sussex on foot, a model bishop with the true pastor's heart, an ascetic like his master, and like him an ardent preacher of the Crusade. By his own request he was buried near the altar of St. Edmund in his own Cathedral Church of Chichester.

During St. Edmund's youth Stephen Langton, perhaps the greatest of our medieval archbishops, ruled at Canterbury, and he himself consecrated at Reading his friend and pupil Robert Grosseteste to the see of Lincoln. Simon de Montfort was at the summit of his career when Edmund went into exile.

To Edmund's lifetime belongs the great Interdict in the reign of John, a kind of general strike of the clergy called by the Pope. During most of those four black years Edmund seems to have been at Paris University ; indeed the Interdict may have partly supplied the reason why he then left his native land.

Magna Charta was signed when he was a man of middle life at Oxford, and the background of his career was that troubled England which struggled confusedly with John and Henry III for the principles which that Charter embodied.

The name of Edmund Rich is no longer to be found in our English Calendar ; the authors

of its latest revision, though they have found room for a St. Anskar of Sweden, do not seem to have thought him worthy of consideration. His feast on November 16 has not been kept since the Reformation, and he is barely remembered by chapels dedicated to him in Westminster, Salisbury, Chichester, and the parish church of Cirencester. Yet on many counts he is worthy to stand high among his peers, the great saints of the thirteenth century. He is no semi-legendary figure but a character about whom a great deal is recorded, and his life may teach us lessons applicable to the days in which we live. We too need scholarship allied to sanctity, and our generation, like his, is overwhelmed with an access of fresh knowledge which requires to be assimilated by religious thought, and is assailed by an epidemic of unbelief which only doctors of the faith can conquer. Social injustice and the forces of moral evil enthroned in the government of the State take different and more democratic forms to-day, but we can imagine circumstances in which the leaders of the Church could serve the cause of righteousness best by even such uncompromising opposition as Edmund's.

Baron von Hügel has taught us that there are three chief elements in the life of religion—the institutional, the mystic, and the intellectual. Edmund has claims to pre-eminence in all three.

As a bishop he stood for the very highest ideals

of the churchman ; he is in the true succession of saints of apostolic life who ruled the flock of Christ, not from ambition nor for filthy lucre, but as a true shepherd, ready if need be to lay down his life for the sheep.

As a mystic he rose to heights of sanctity only to be attained by those who make prayer the master passion of their life. He is among the great contemplatives who struggled through the ways of purgation and illumination to the state of union with God. In the secular or non-monastic life he outstripped the professed religious in his love for prayer and holy poverty.

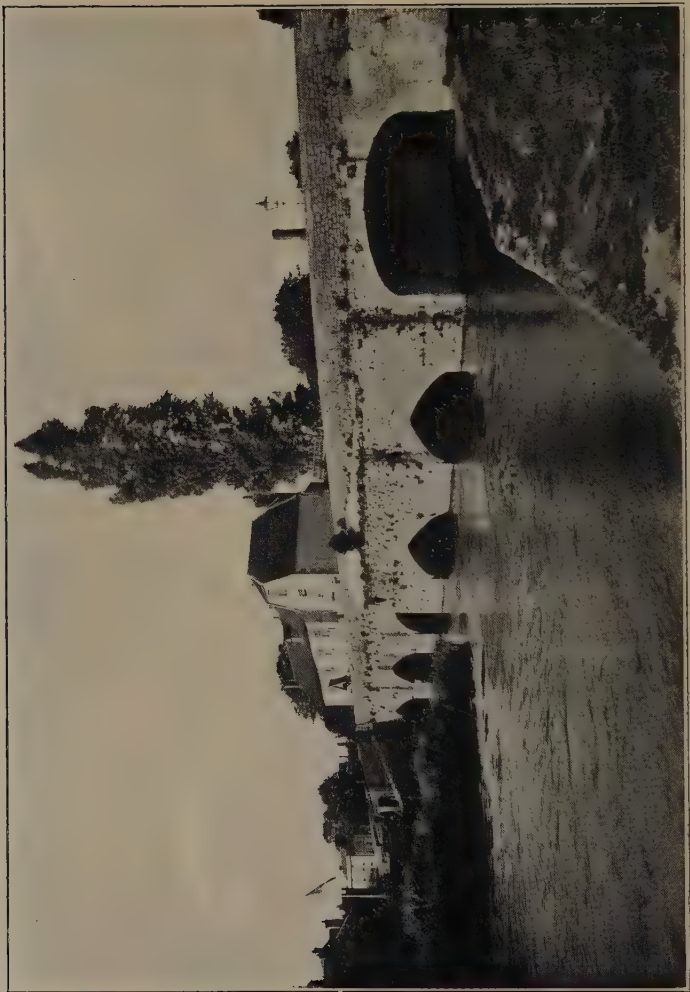
Moreover, unlike his great contemporary St. Francis, he excelled also in the realm of intellect. He was consumed with the passion for the pursuit of truth, and gave the best energies of his life to the toil of scholarship in that great warfare for the faith which was waged in the early history of the Universities.

Thus he was among those who, like Robert Grosseteste his friend, laid the foundations and prepared the way for the great Schoolmen of the succeeding generation.

His was that type of sanctity which has generally been recognised as the highest—namely, the “ mixed life ” which combines the active and the contemplative, the way of Mary and the way of Martha.

He lived in the world as one not of the world,

having more solid claims to saintship than the evidence of miracles, though these were not absent. So long as men honour courage linked with humility they must own the attractiveness of this patient and suffering servant of God.



ABINGDON BRIDGE.

facing p. 32.

CHAPTER II

EDMUND AT OXFORD

EDMUND RICH of Abingdon was the eldest of four children, and was born when the twelfth century was near its end. His brother Robert, who became a priest and is one of the authorities for the life of the saint, accompanied him to Oxford and Paris, and seems to have been with him during most of his life. His two sisters, Margaret and Alice, who were famed for their good looks, took a vow of virginity during their mother's lifetime, and after her death entered the Convent of Catesby, where Margaret eventually became Prioress. His father Reginald, who is said without much certainty to have been engaged in the rope-making business, took monastic vows at the Benedictine Monastery at Eynsham, with his wife's consent, when his children were quite young, so that the whole care of this little family devolved upon their mother, Mabel Rich. She plays the part of Monnica to this English St. Augustine, though without Monnica's cause for tears.

We know enough of Mabel Rich to be sure that she was a woman of a very strong and remarkable personality as well as a *dévôté* with all the characteristics of her age, which differs in some respects so strangely from our own. She seems to have accepted quite as a natural thing her husband's belated choice of the religious life, though it seems to us incompatible with the indissolubility of the married state, and the fact that such vocations, common enough in the days of early Saxon Christianity, were still possible at this time is shown from the Provincial Constitutions of St. Edmund, where it is laid down that "a married person cannot enter religion without the Archbishop's sanction." It was indeed a practice open to abuse, and sometimes merely meant that a man was wearied of his wife, hence proceedings could be taken, at the instance of their wives, against men who took this step without due cause. Typical also of the time is her fervent belief in practices of voluntary self-mortification. She wore a metal breast-plate over a hair shirt beneath the decent and comely apparel of a housewife of the better sort, and she encouraged her little family, whose care she thus undertook single-handed, in habits of austere self-discipline from their earliest years, encouraging them by little presents to fast once a week on bread and water.

It is obvious that Mabel Rich was a woman of stern virtue and indomitable will ; we judge that

she was a masterful personality. It has been suggested that her husband's retirement to a monastery was due to these qualities in his spouse, but this rather cynical inference has no evidence to justify it ; it is better to put the best construction on the doings of good people and to confine our suspicions of the motives of unusual actions to the case of those whom we know to be discreditable. Certainly if her husband had a desire for the monastic life she would never have stood in the way of his trying to fulfil his vocation.

The fact that all her children gave themselves to the service of God goes to confirm the praises which the chroniclers lavish upon her, but her chief claim to greatness is her influence upon Edmund, her eldest and most brilliant son. It is clear that she moulded his character and that he formed the habit of complete obedience to her will. Edmund had always the mental habits of one who looks trustfully to higher authority ; his was the nature more apt to serve loyally than to assert the independence that commands. His conception of the hierarchy of the Church made him a loyal servant rather than a bold and daring leader ; hence came his failure, when he mounted the chair of St. Augustine, for failure in a sense it was. He looked instinctively to the chair of St. Peter, and the Pope proved unworthy of his loyalty. The rod he leaned on broke ; this was the tragedy of his career, but the key to the future

Archbishop's character lies in the days when he lived as a child under Mabel's roof at Abingdon, where she attended the night office in the Abbey and was diligent in fasting, almsgiving, and all good works, like many another English woman in a cathedral town.

The great monastery by the Thames under whose shadow Mabel passed her life had even then a history reaching back at least seven centuries, beyond the age of King Alfred, beyond the age of Charlemagne. It boasted a charter of King Ina, who refounded the house in the seventh century ; it shared with Canterbury, Glastonbury, and Winchester an honourable tradition of almost continuous life through the Dark Ages, and it had been in the forefront of the reforming movement of the days of St. Dunstan under the great Abbot Ethelwold.

It owned vast lands, including the " Vill " of Kensington, where the Church of St. Mary Abbot is so called because it was an appanage of Abingdon.

To this monastery the Conqueror had sent his youngest son Henry, whose name of Beauclerc was a testimonial to the education which it gave him. Mabel must have known old men who could remember Henry I, and one may be certain that the good Fathers would not allow their princely pupil's name to be forgotten.

One may wonder why Mabel did not send her

clever boy to the monastery school ; for we have all been taught to believe that monasteries were great centres of education. It is doubtful, however, whether " monastic schools " existed in any effective sense until teaching orders were established in the counter-reformation. At the most they were probably little more than seminaries for twelve or thirteen boys in the almonry outside the Abbey Gate. Because kings sent their sons to be tutored in great monastic houses whose Abbot ranked as a noble, it does not follow that the townsfolk could obtain the same privileges, and keeping school was no part of the religious life, except in so far as the monastery educated its own novices. Such monastic schools as there may have been in the period after Charlemagne died out with the rise of Universities ; Anselm was the last of the great monastic teachers.

Nevertheless it is remarkable that a woman of the character of Mabel Rich should have sent her boy to Oxford.

Abingdon in those days lay between two towns dominated by castles, that of Wallingford, a little way down-stream, and that of Oxford, a few miles up the river. The citizen of Abingdon probably did not look with much favour on either town, and it is known that between Abingdon and Wallingford there was bitter rivalry about the right of market.

At Oxford there had lately grown up one of

those assemblies, unions, or guilds for the sake of study and the pursuit of learning which were known first as *Studia generalia*, public or general schools, and eventually acquired the exclusive use of one of the many terms for a corporation, the "*Universitas*." To the Abingdon of Mabel Rich that "*Universitas*" of scholars at Oxford must have seemed an upstart institution, rough, secular, and modern by comparison with the dignified amenities of the ancient Abbey town.

But Mabel chose Oxford for her little boy ; and that choice proved momentous both for him and for the cause of Christian learning.

For the Universities of Europe, which were soon to come under the influence of the Friars, and become illustrious through the labours of the Schoolmen—these homes of learning which were to affect so profoundly the whole development of European culture—were still in their turbulent and unformed youth, and there was little of the atmosphere of the cloister about them.

It was Abelard, at the close of the eleventh century, who started the intellectual movement out of which they sprang ; they met a great need of an age passing out of barbarism into civilised life, and young men, the sons of yeomen, citizens, and retainers, of the class above the villein or serf and below the knight, stirred by the restless ferment that began to make itself felt as Europe emerged from the Dark Ages, flocked to any

great teacher, settled round him in a kind of swarm, and were apt to migrate like bees to some fresh centre under the attraction of a rival name or on the occasion of some disturbance in their chosen seat of learning. Oxford is said to owe its origin to a migration of the English students from Paris, and later on a migration of the same nature from Oxford gave birth to the sister English University at Cambridge.

In those days men, not buildings nor endowments, made a University. No need was felt of courts, quadrangles, or endowed professorships; any large room served as a "school" or lecture room where students on the floor grouped round a master. The hunger for learning was there, even if educational methods and apparatus were of the simplest kind. The lectures were not usually monologues delivered *ex cathedrâ*, but took the form of disputations between the teacher and his students, after which the teacher summed up and the students reproduced the lesson from their notes.

For their public functions any large church provided accommodation, and their self-government developed according as the need dictated.

The greatest University was Paris, still one of the largest in the world. (There were, according to *The Times*, 22,000 students in that University in 1926, of whom 3,300 were foreigners.) In Edmund's day Paris owed its prestige to memories

of Abelard, and Dr. Rashdall compares its renown to that of Athens in the days of Pericles or Florence in the time of the Medici.

By choosing a course at Oxford, and subsequently Paris, for her two sons Mabel Rich showed not only that she was abreast of the times, but that she did not shrink from taking risks which a woman of her temper must have counted as the gravest possible.

Young men were flocking to Oxford from all parts ; Wales and Ireland as well as England sent their contingents, for Ireland alone of European countries at this time had no University, and the land once known as the Island of the Saints, which had kept the torch of learning alight in the Dark Ages when the rest of Europe was submerged in barbarism, was forced to use Oxford for such learning as it could get. We are not surprised to find Irish names such as Odo of Kilkenny among the clerks who were prominent in the frequent riots which convulsed the town.

Free thought was then amazingly free in this world of youth intoxicated with new and crude ideas. Settled opinions were in the melting-pot, and scholars joined heatedly in debate on such themes as that which so shocked Brother Agnellus of Pisa, the first Franciscan to found a school in Oxford, when he discovered his scholars disputing on the thesis "*Utrum Deus sit*"—"Whether God exists."

Discipline was chaotic, drunken brawls were frequent, arrows were apt to fly as freely as revolver bullets in a Western mining camp, and the saying that "When Oxford draws the knife, all England is at strife" expressed the reputation of the place. Some of the songs survive which once were roared in every University ; they have nothing in common with the hymns of the Church except the felicity of their Latin which comes so trippingly off the tongue. According to one of them the students' chief ambition was to die drinking :

Mihi est propositum in taberna mori
Vinum sit oppositum morientis ori
Ut dicant cum venerint Angelorum chori
Deus sit propitius huicce potatori.

The Oxford that Chaucer knew, nearly two centuries after Edmund's day, had benefited by the influence of the Friars. There can be little doubt that it was a more civilised and Christian place with a comparatively settled and developed constitution, yet the scholars who figure in the Canterbury Tales are rough material. The Clerk of Oxenford, who is himself among the Pilgrims, was indeed a man after St. Edmund's own heart, poor, ready to beg for money to buy books, an enthusiastic student of sound learning, ambitious to possess twenty volumes "clothed in black or red of Aristotle and his philosophie."

But the University scholars who figure in the Miller's and the Reeve's tales represent the popular idea of the fourteenth-century undergraduate: Nicholas, the Oxonian, lodges with a carpenter and appears to be of a lower social standing than his landlord. He is effeminate, a fop, and a knave of evil life. At his bed's head is found, not black and red volumes of Aristotle, but the apparatus of those pseudo-sciences whose magic bewitched the Middle Ages, "his almageste" for transmutation of metals and "his astrolabe" for astrological research. The Cambridge scholars Alein and John, North Country youths speaking a provincial dialect, set out from their Hall to repay the cheating Miller of Trumpington in his own coin with one horse between them but a sword and buckler apiece. They are as rough and mischievous a pair of scoundrels as can be imagined and quite deficient in any moral decencies. Things must have been even worse in the younger University of Edmund's day. Oxford then probably recruited its ranks almost entirely from the poorer sort of people. Grosse-teste, who was the son of a small farmer in Suffolk, Edmund of Abingdon, and Richard de la Wych would have been typical of the social standing of the better sort of students.

The Friars when they appeared in England were popular with the gentle folk, and many nobles entered the Franciscan Order. John de St. Giles,

who in the middle of a sermon in praise of holy poverty determined to resign his worldly wealth, descended from the pulpit, assumed the black habit of the Dominicans and finished his discourse, was a fashionable physician employed by kings. Such men drew the gentry in greater numbers to the Universities. Among the Franciscans who soon were to make Oxford famous were Roger Bacon, Adam Marsh, Duns Scotus, Ockham, and John Peckham, or John of Patcham, a village near Brighton, afterwards Archbishop; indeed the English Franciscans were the most learned of all the Order, and were famed through Europe.

“Within five years,” says Mr. Stevenson, in his *Life of Grosseteste*, “they had established themselves in every important city in England. In a little more than thirty years the members of the Order had increased from 9 to 1,242.”

However, Edmund was a grown man when Richard Ingworth and Richard of Devon, the first forerunners of this mighty order, came knocking at the gate of the Monastery of Abingdon on their way to Oxford, whose University their brethren were soon to revolutionise. The porter, says Matthew Paris, took them for jesters and led the monks to expect an entertainment from such strangely light-hearted travellers. But when the two men protested that they were servants of God on an apostolic mission they were ordered off the premises and sheltered in a barn.

To Oxford then went Edmund as little more than a child fresh from his sheltered home at Abingdon. Here he attended some school attached to the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, and lived as a schoolboy among other boys, for it was not till 1368 that William of Wykeham founded his school in preparation for the University ; at this time, about 1192, the rudiments of learning were taught in Oxford itself, and scholars of tender years were to be found there as well as grown-up men.

It is told of Edmund at this time that when assisting at Mass he used to slip out with his companions by the north porch of the church to play. Once when he was thus acting the truant he felt a buffet from an invisible hand and heard a voice commanding him to go back to church, "for this is the hour of holy mass." From this moment he began to take religion seriously.

It was during his Oxford boyhood, when he was promoted to share the games of the bigger boys, "*cum provectioribus scholaribus associaretur*," that he drew apart from them in the playing field and saw his vision of our Lord. It has been suggested that this happened in the meadows by the Cherwell near St. Clement's Church, but all we know is that it was "in a certain meadow near Oxford."

All through his life he seems to have been of a dreamy disposition, apt to retire into a world of

his own in which he was unconscious of exterior things. So we may picture him wandering by the river, quite forgetting where he was, and "meditating on divine matters." To him thus lost in thought there appeared a Child of wonderful beauty, "white with snowy whiteness and ruddy with the freshness of the rose," who saluted Edmund, saying "Hail, my well beloved." The Child went on to ask if Edmund did not know Him, and when Edmund confessed that he did not He replied : " I wonder that you do not recognise Me, for I sit at your right hand in school, and am your companion wherever you go."

The Child then bade Edmund look in His face, and there he saw written on His forehead, " Jesus of Nazareth," and the Child bade Edmund to trace these words often on his own brow. This experience influenced Edmund deeply and permanently, for Bertrand, Edmund's chamberlain, who followed his master into exile and whose memories are one of the chief authorities for our knowledge of the saint, tells how he saw the old Archbishop trace this Name upon his forehead repeatedly, and how Edmund once said to him : " Take care that every night before you sleep you write on your forehead : ' Jesus of Nazareth.' "

The other well-known story about him at this period is that when he was in his teens he secretly placed a ring on the finger of an image of our

Lady in the north aisle of St. Mary's Church, as a sign of a vow of chastity which he then took, retaining a similar ring on his own hand as a token of his engagement. He wore this ring all his life and asked that it might be buried with him.

The story goes on to say that when he had said his prayer and registered his vow he tried to withdraw the ring from our Lady's finger, but that it resisted all his efforts to remove it.

That he may have made such a vow to our Lady with a ring is very probable, and it is certain that he lived all his life in vowed virginity. The tale is connected with his first years at Oxford, with a period of which his brother Robert says that "as knowledge increased so his difficulties increased"; but the tale of the statue which retained a votary's ring is a more ancient one, and in the earlier version the image is not one of the holy Mother of God, but of a pagan deity. However, we need not be scornful of the story; there is comparatively little of the marvellous in the records of St. Edmund's life, and there is something gracious and touching in the picture of the shy youth making his valiant promise in the empty church.

Edmund was now a serious student, "working," they said, "as if he was to live for ever, living as if he were to die to-morrow." Even as a youth he wore the aspect of a scholar saint.

At this time he suffered from violent headaches, and his mother gave him what seems the strange advice to have his tonsure more carefully cut, a remedy which proved immediately successful. No doubt a canonically correct tonsure involved a closer crop than the heavy masses of hair which many men wore at this date, and the mere cropping may have cured the headaches, but Mabel attributed a supernatural virtue to the tonsure in itself. All scholars at the University were then clerks in minor orders ; the square academic cap of the modern undergraduate is a relic of this rule. This did not mean that undergraduates were anything like what we call clergymen ; those “ thousands of boys ” of whom Green’s History tells us, “ huddled in bare lodgings, clustering round teachers as poor as themselves in church porch and house porch, drinking, quarrelling, dicing, lagging at the corners of the streets,” were given the tonsure according to that elastic conception of “ orders ” which the medieval world entertained. Being scholars, they ranked as clerics or clerks, and could claim to be dealt with by Canon Law, the more civilised system of jurisprudence administered by the Bishops as opposed to the Civil Law of the King’s courts, in which proficiency with the battle-axe gave an unfair advantage to the man of muscle. “ We have to take ourselves back,” as Dr. Rashdall writes, “ to a state of society in which a

judicial trial was a tournament, and the ordeal an approved substitute for evidence, to realise what civilisation owes to the Canon Law and the canonists, with their elaborate system of written law, their judicial evidence, and their written procedure."

The savagery of the King's courts helps us to understand why men loved St. Thomas Becket.

There were also other immunities and privileges belonging to clerks which explain why all professional and learned men were by custom included among the ranks of clergy. Edmund, whatever may have been the fashions of his age, lived as one dedicated to God not only by formal custom but by his own will and glad desire. In that age of violent contrasts where the most exalted sanctity rubbed shoulders with animal ruffianism, when the fiercest and most brutal warriors often ended their days in monasteries, did penance, and claimed burial in the religious habit, when half the world built castles which were houses of horror and half built churches which were dreams of heaven crystallised in stone, we see this delicately sensitive and already saintly boy living and toiling happily among surroundings which would seem to the least squeamish mind to-day barbarous and rough beyond imagination.

CHAPTER III

EDMUND AT PARIS

THE next step in the saint's career is that which carried him to Paris ; and here again we see the directing hand of Mabel Rich. He had probably advanced as far in *Ars Grammatica* as Oxford could take him, and his mother determined that both he and his brother Robert should go on to the most famous University in Christendom. When she gave the two boys what she could afford for the expenses of their journey they stood "with downcast looks," for even by the frugal standards of the time the provision she could make was perilously small ; but Mabel protested that she was too poor to afford luxuries, and with the Spartan sternness which is characteristic of all we read of her she gave them a hair shirt apiece, which she desired them to wear twice a week. "If you do this," she said, "the Lord will look after you."

If Mabel was austere to them, this widow whose life was obviously bound up in her sons, who yet sent them abroad at a time when she

might have looked to them for companionship and support, was severe on herself also. It is easy to criticise the stern self-mortification in which she trained Edmund, both by precept and her own example, and there is certainly a good deal of the hair shirt in her idea of education ; but perhaps nothing short of such heroic measures could have preserved his spotless purity of mind in that age of uncontrolled passions and exuberant animal spirits. " The best and the worst of the Middle Ages," says Mr. Trevelyan, " was that they were full of wolfish life and energy." The rein rather than the spur was needed by thirteenth-century youth ; and she must have known that Edmund was being flung into a whirlpool of temptation. At any rate she taught him to fend for himself, and if she left him to sink or swim she had given him the training which would be his best protection. Her teaching was not wasted ; there was something fierce in Edmund's purity, as the following incident shows.

While he was still a youth in Paris, the daughter of the house where he lodged, a girl of loose morals, attracted by the handsome English student, pursued him with the most persistent attentions. Being unable to put a stop to her advances by all his expostulations, Edmund made an appointment to meet the girl in the room where he worked, and when she came to throw

herself into his arms he gave her a sound and unexpected thrashing, which brought the young woman to her senses and caused her to reform her ways. Green, in his *Short History of the English People*, represents the castigation as being administered "by grave academical officials" whom the saint brought in his company, but the chroniclers say nothing of the sort ; the boy had to take the law into his own hands, and he acted according to the rough standards of the thirteenth century. It seems clear from what Green himself says that the scholars at that time were utterly unprotected by academic discipline ; indeed the worst characteristic of University life as St. Edmund found it in his student days was that it represented an attempt at merely intellectual education without any moral discipline whatever. The *Vie de Bohème* of Murger's *Quartier Latin* would have seemed sedate and prim by comparison with the licence of student life in his Paris, and Edmund had to fight his own battles as best he could without any protection which official authority could afford.

One would like to know more of his career at Paris, but even precisely how long he resided there, and whether he had two periods of residence at that University or only one is not quite certain. Doubtless he was initiated as a freshman or *bejan*, with the customary ragging and ritual buffooneries of which Dr. Rashdall tells us, into

that self-governing society of scholars drawn from every European country. After 1231 the students were classed under their separate nationalities as French, Spanish, Italians, Germans, Hungarians, Scandinavians, Poles, English or Normans, and sorted into "Nations," but in his day there was free intercourse among them all. The University movement represented a reaction against the repressive regulation whereby the feudal system tied men down to the land where they did service to their lord. All the youth of Europe went wandering and migrating : Universities sprang up like mushrooms and often vanished as rapidly. An invariable law of all Universities—one of the few strict rules they seem to have kept—forbade students to converse in any tongue but Latin, so that the barrier of languages was overcome, but the mingling of nationalities must have added to the fever of those student communities so intolerant of any restraint except such laws as they were evolving for themselves.

In their origin the Universities were moved by a strong undercurrent of antagonism to the Church, for the Friars had not yet come to the rescue of religion, and even the school of the Sorbonne was not yet founded. The restless flood of student life surged through the narrow streets of Paris, where all classes, as well as peoples, met and mingled, most of them half starving, all

driven by the same strange famine for knowledge, all busily remodelling the world in talk after the immemorial fashion of the undergraduate. It was a flowering period of the European intellect, but as yet all these inquiring minds had little of the steadying influence of a great literature or an established philosophy.

The scarcity and the great cost of books affected the whole character of the teaching of the day. There is a record of a pocket breviary, made indeed for a countess, which cost ten shillings for the vellum sheets and fourteen shillings for the writing, executed at Oxford. This would be equivalent to about £17 in our money. So precious were books that it was considered an almost superhuman act of charity when St. Edmund, in a time of exceptional dearth at Paris, sold a beautiful Psalter, a Pentateuch, a book of the Twelve Prophets, also copies of the Epistles of St. Paul and the Decretals, and gave the proceeds to help to feed poor scholars.

This tenderness of heart is part of his nature, for when he was Regent in Arts at Oxford he had a sick pupil carried to his own lodgings and nursed him, sitting up with him every night for nearly five weeks, while he went on with his lecturing as usual ; but probably it cost him more to part with his beloved library. Books must have become more like personal friends to scholars when they were not standardised by the printing

press, when each vellum volume, written in faultless level script, was the product of a skilled and careful hand, a thing known to its possessor, individual, and not quite like any other in the world. Edmund once fell asleep and let his candle fall upon the page of Scripture he was studying. Waking to find the extinct candle lying upon the book undamaged, he, or his friends who heard the story, discerned a manifest miracle, for to burn a hole in a book was to destroy a possession not easy to replace. When in later years a careless friend lost his Bible on a journey from France to England, Edmund gave way to an outburst of passion which is remembered as singular in his even-tempered life, and he generously declined the gift of a complete copy of the Scriptures which the Archbishop of York offered to have written out for him because he did not wish to burden any monastery with such a heavy task.

All this is worth bearing in mind when we consider the rise of the early Universities. When, for instance, an author of the period, Giraldus Cambrensis, produced a book which in modern times would have been a "best seller," in order to publish his views he invited the University of Oxford on three successive days to the largest hall available and read his work out loud to them. When practically all teaching had to be given orally men must have been perilously dependent on their lecturers, for there can hardly have been

enough first-rate masters to handle the thousands of scholars satisfactorily.

Unlike the modern Englishman, who studies facts and little else and is embarrassed by the innumerable books he is expected to read, the medieval students had not enough material to bite upon ; consequently they spent most of their energy on rarefied and abstract speculations uncorrected by any weight of facts ; they revelled unwholesomely in metaphysical arguments drawn out with fine-spun subtleties, and became enthusiastically argumentative devotees of logic.

Few things are more dangerous than daring theorising unbalanced either by a sufficient store of facts or by the discipline of the study and comparison of first-rate authors, and the same evil repeats itself with less excuse to-day in " Labour Colleges," where intelligent minds are fed on small textbooks and highly controversial abstract theories. There were great masters at Paris ; for instance Alexander Hales, later on to become a Franciscan, was teaching there during Edmund's time ; he knew Edmund as a student, and was one of the witnesses who promoted his canonisation ; nevertheless we shall not understand St. Edmund's life and work unless we bear in mind that the student world in which he served his apprenticeship was a world of clever brains taught with bad tools. We know on Roger Bacon's authority that St. Edmund was the first

who read the *Sophistici Elenchi* of Aristotle at Oxford, and this shows that he followed an enlightened policy. Even the greatest scholars of the West at this time seldom knew Greek or Hebrew. According to Roger Bacon, Grosse-teste himself, the most encyclopaedic scholar of the time, did not know these languages well enough to make translations from them till the latter portion of his life. Aristotle was read only in a translation of a translation, in Latin versions of the Arabic of Averroës, and his teaching was coloured and distorted by the medium of Moslem thought through which it passed. It was mainly the physical treatises of Aristotle, rather than his works on logic, which came to the Western world through these Arabic translations ; and a great part of the task of the reformers of learning was to get back to "the book at large"—that is, to the actual text instead of bad abridgments or expansions of it.

Though all danger of a Moslem conquest of Europe, once imminent, had long ago been averted when Charles Martel rolled back the armies of the Prophet on the field of Tours, nevertheless Saracenic culture remained a formidable rival to the civilisation of northern Christendom, still in its raw and callow youth ; for intellectual domination is not to be conquered by the force of arms, and the tradition of a great culture does not quickly die.

Beyond the rampart of the Pyrenees, still dazzling to the eyes of Europe, lay the most imposing civilisation then existing in the world. In Edmund's day the great mosque at Cordova, with its one thousand and ninety-three columns, its sanctuary paved with silver, its wealth of porphyry, jasper, and marble, its walls inlaid with lapis lazuli and gold, was still thronged with dark-skinned worshippers. The palaces of the Moors of Spain, whose splendours read like scenes from a fantastic fairy tale, formed a strange contrast to the wooden hovels in which our forefathers passed their lives. While the lords of England walked on filthy rush-strewn floors in their barbaric halls, and mobs of ragged students crowded the dark lanes of Paris and of Oxford, the Moors were pacing with grave dignity over pavements of polished marble spread with priceless carpets of the East. In gardens by the Guadalquivir, in "The Meadow of Murmuring Waters" or "The Garden of the Water Wheel," men still recalled the glories of the Khalif Abd-er-Rahman the Third, builder of the suburb and palace of Ez-Zakra, whose harem held six thousand women and whose attendants numbered more than thirteen thousand slaves—a strange contrast to the boy Edmund dreaming of the Boy-Christ on the banks of the Cherwell. Among the fountains on the terraces of Spain cultured Mohammedans debated the mysteries of a faith bitterly hostile to Christianity,

or composed verses in praise of the delights of love and wine, while beer-drinking Englishmen mustered round preachers of the Crusades in northern market squares.

As Mr. Lane Poole reminds us in his fascinating book, *The Moors in Spain*, the teachers of Cordova made her pre-eminent in learning as she was supreme in art. Scholars came from all parts of Europe to study under her famous masters long before East and West met in the Crusades, and Averroës, the twelfth-century philosopher of Cordova, furnished the only link between our medieval world and Aristotle. Every branch of science was studied there, and Cordova had so long been the centre of European culture that it was impossible for the revival of learning in our Universities to escape the Moslem influence.

Nor was Spain the only home of this golden age of Islam; the medical treatises of Avicenna, the Persian doctor of Ispahan, were in general use in European Universities, and continued to be so till long after Edmund's day. Through Avicenna, who learned it from Galen, the great tradition of Hippocrates was, in a garbled form, transmitted to the Western world.

Not without reason, then, did Islam look with contempt upon the barbaric culture and still childish learning of Catholicism, and Christendom itself, emerging from anarchy into a renaissance of intellectual life, was going through the dangers

incidental to a time of rapid mental growth. The air was laden with the infection of the decadence of Moorish culture, for great civilisations in their decay breed poisons, and the arts of alchemy and astrology were a legacy from Islam to Europe. Michael Scott, the wizard whose patron was Frederic II, studied magic, both natural and black, at Toledo, and even Dominicans like Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus, the master of Aquinas, wasted much labour in efforts to discover the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. Both alchemy and algebra betray their Arabic origin by their names, which suggest that black arts as well as liberal arts were learned by Christians from their Moorish neighbours.

We read in the Provincial Constitutions of St. Edmund, issued by him when Archbishop in 1236, that the sinners who are to be excommunicated publicly three times a year include "fortune tellers and dealers with the devil." These are enumerated before "abusers of the sacrament, freebooters and those who maliciously hinder the execution of wills."

Then, as in our own day, the fascinating lure of the occult, which is a parasitic growth infecting all decadent religions, presented a real danger which the Faith had to overcome.

The medieval schools, which Edmund entered as a child and from which he emerged as a commanding intellectual leader, were the arena of

a battle between Catholic truth and errors bred in that pool of blackness which lies in Asiatic philosophy, between Christianity and Pantheism, truth and anarchic theories affecting both reasoning and conduct. The opposition of Realism against Nominalism was not mere hair-splitting : it meant, Mr. Chesterton considers, conflict with a scepticism more fundamental than mere atheism, so that the saints in the Universities saved not the religion only but the sanity of the Western world. Very soon Aquinas was to take all knowledge for his province and the scholastic philosophy was to reign supreme, but the world in which Edmund laboured was one in which the propositions contradicted in the *Summa Theologica* were not all men of straw set up for the scholars to knock down ; many of them were the sort of theses which men defended on the supposed authority of Aristotle or even of the Gospels, from which one might construct a nightmare world of unreason and misrule.

To-day the Faith has to contend with a scepticism resulting from the dissolution of Protestant belief, but there was more than what we know as Modernism in the ancient Universities, for many of the false doctrines of that age held within themselves the seeds of social anarchy and even that taint of madness which seems to affect the Western mind when brought in contact with Oriental thought—something like Bolshevism mixed with Theosophy.

Of all the saints whom the Church sent into the Universities, by whose agency she mastered the movement of thought and gained control of it, none was more completely equipped than St. Edmund. In his person the gifts of scholar and teacher were wedded to the charm of holiness, and sanctity then commanded respect from the most unruly and ignorant as well as among the learned and devout.

Before he died the Friars had established their footing both in Oxford and Paris, but he was of the advance guard of the intellectual revolution of the age.

After this long digression, let us get back to his progress as a student under the shadow of the Cathedral Church of Notre-Dame, then approaching its completion amid a cloud of scaffolding.

He was becoming what he was always to remain, a man who crowded into his life more than seems possible both of prayer and work. His day began by hearing the night office sung in St. Merri, that ancient church long since rebuilt which stands in the Rue St. Martin, close to the Rue de Rivoli, and after matins was over he remained in prayer before the altar of the Blessed Virgin till he went from the church to the schools. Here we touch the very spring and secret of St. Edmund's life, that which differentiated him from common men, setting

him apart among his contemporaries. One might subtract everything else from him—all his gifts of learning and the powers of leadership which carried him from the position of a poor scholar to the Primacy of England—and still, by virtue of those long hours spent night after night in solitude before our Lady's altar, he would remain a saint, retaining what is essential in his character.

For saintship, though indeed a gift of grace, is not attained without effort and patient co-operation with the grace of God. Of all the activities in which the spirit of man can exercise itself prayer is the highest and the most sublime, and in no other sphere is there greater scope for perfection and advance. One student can excel another in natural gifts and power of taking pains, but not to the degree whereby the saint excels the level of spiritual attainment that is common to all good men who pray.

The master passion of the life of Edmund was the love of God. It was this which acted like a strong compulsion, driving him to steal time from his studies in order that he might be alone with his Creator; and so far as we can judge from hints dropped by his biographers, all through his life, as a youthful scholar, as a lecturer and teacher, as a busy priest and an archbishop, he never forsook this habit of prolonged nocturnal prayer.

The true background of his career, the scene of his greatest achievements, is that dark church in Paris, his chamber at Oxford, and his private chapel at Canterbury. This hidden life of his, the years of prayer which balanced years of labour, carried him far into the unexplored territory where spiritual things are spiritually discerned, where God reveals His secrets to His own. Edmund may have been inspired in this practice of nocturnal prayer by the example of English saints of an earlier day, for Bede tells of King Oswald that "he often remained in church absorbed in prayer from the time of the service of matins" (between midnight and three o'clock) "till daybreak," and ascribes the same custom almost in the same words to another Oswald, Archbishop of York, and to a royal abbess. The monks returned to rest after the night office, but it seems to have been a devout practice in the eighth century to forgo these hours of sleep. Here, as in the action of his father, who became a monk while still a married man, we are reminded of the religious customs of an older England.

There have always been contemplatives who, in order that they might give themselves to prayer as the absorbing task of life, have withdrawn from the world and forsaken active work. This was done by an Oxford scholar, Richard Rolle of Hampole, who in the next generation after Edmund abandoned a life of scholarship for a

hermit's cell in Yorkshire and lived a life "set towards the light unseen with great desire." There are also many more good Christians who are so busy with affairs that they complain they have very little time to pray.

Edmund, looking rather wistfully at the monastic life as a vocation which he envied but which was not meant for him, crowded into his busy day more than its twenty-four hours could have been expected to hold, and lived both the active and the contemplative life together.

The danger for him was lest the absorption of study should crowd out the life of prayer, and, as we shall shortly see, the adjustment of the imperious claims of intellectual labour and the mystic life set up a strain in his soul which was only relieved when he forsook the study of natural science for the study of the queen of sciences, theology.

All through his life he trained himself to do with the very minimum of sleep, and he was said never to lie down in his bed, but to rest in a sitting position propped up against it. The wonder is, not that he seems to have sometimes dropped asleep while lecturing, but that his students—men accustomed to hiss or to applaud their lecturers like a rowdy audience in a theatre—so loved him that they would wait patiently till he awoke. But he was not lecturing yet, he was absorbing all that Paris had to teach him, that he

might take it back to Oxford and give it to his own countrymen.

From Paris he was called home in time to be present at his mother's deathbed and receive her last blessing. That intrepid woman had done her work and had made Edmund all that she had prayed that he might be. In every parcel of clothes which she despatched from Abingdon to her two sons had been a pair of hair shirts, as a reminder of her teaching and example. Perhaps she could not write, but she could send a message that was eloquent enough, and by her love and her force of character she maintained so strong a hold over her son that even after her death her memory was to dictate the direction of his career.

One most important duty she had to lay upon Edmund before she died—namely, the safe disposal of Margaret and Alice, his sisters, whose future now became his responsibility; and a heavy one it must have been for a young scholar of Paris University.

Mabel felt, not without reason, that the world was no safe place for two beautiful young women with no home. They had already taken a vow of virginity, and she charged Edmund to find a suitable convent to take them in. For this purpose she had laid aside a sum of money, and her last act was to point out to him by a speechless gesture the casket which contained it.

But precisely in this matter Edmund's conscience embarrassed him. He was always notoriously, as we should say, unpractical ; he hated money, and treated it with such contempt that, as his later history shows, when he had plenty of it he gave away so much that he was continually and desperately in debt. Specially he disliked any association of money transactions with the affairs of religion. Now there were canonical prohibitions against monastic dowries ; it was, in fact, forbidden repeatedly by Councils from the second of Nicaea to the fourth Lateran Council to pay money in respect of admission to a religious house. In practice this rule was evaded, and in later times it became so completely a dead letter that the payment of some sum for maintenance was looked upon as a regular and necessary thing, for nuns have to be fed like other people, and only too many of the nunneries were poverty-stricken and bankrupt because women could not maintain themselves by work as monks could do. Ecclesiastical authority set its face against the practice of nuns keeping schools, but nevertheless Sisters constantly took well-to-do pupils for a living. To Edmund's sensitive conscience the payment of a dowry savoured of simony, and he went from convent to convent seeking for a home which would receive his sisters without one.

“ Monasterium vix reperire potuit, quod eas

reciperet, nisi certam summam pecuniae dandam cum eis monasterio praetaxaret."

At last he found the poor Priory of Catesby, in Northamptonshire, which took the two girls gladly. The Prioress assured him, before he could explain his errand, that she knew his wishes by divine revelation and that his sisters would not be rejected, nor would any dowry be required.

Having placed this heavy responsibility in the hands of the Prioress, Edmund, now wholly free from domestic cares, went back to Paris.

There was an uncompromising strain in our saint which is well illustrated by this incident, and his subsequent history shows that he would never countenance what he believed to be abuses. The question of nuns' dowries is one of those cases in which people agreed to make a tacit compromise between the letter of the law and the exigencies of this imperfect world. To pay a premium in order to ensure entrance to a religious house so as to buy the religious life for cash would of course be simony ; it was, moreover, a very practical temptation and the kind of thing which led to grave abuses. On the other hand, to ask a poor community to clothe and feed two young women for life without any contribution to the common fund is scarcely practical.

Edmund, however, did not see the matter in that light ; he would tolerate no abandonment of primitive ideals. Nothing is so intolerant as

youth, and he was very young. Even in later years financial prudence and the force of economic law did not count for much with him.

Mabel had schooled him so well that he will not now accept even her own directions given with her dying breath where they run counter to what he believes to be the precepts of the Holy Church.

When men with such exalted ideals as this, and with a conscience quite unable to accommodate itself to circumstances, are raised to high positions in the world, their fate is likely to be a tragic one. So it was to prove later on with Edmund Rich.

CHAPTER IV

EDMUND LECTURER IN THEOLOGY

ABOUT this point in Edmund's life, after his return from Paris, occurs his sojourn for a year at Merton Abbey, a monastery of the Austin Canons in Surrey. Here he lived among the brethren as one of themselves, attending all the offices and conforming to the rule of the house. The monks declared that though a young man and a secular he appeared to them the model of a good religious, and of this visit the tale is told that he hardly knew by sight at the end of it the brother who had waited on him at table all that time. The reasons for such a retreat remain a matter for conjecture. Though Edmund was a mystic, he does not ever seem to have thought of being a monk, nor does it appear that he was yet in Holy orders. He was at that time a Master of Paris University and an accomplished scholar, but he was also already a man of prayer who had so trained himself in the discipline of ascetic devotion that he could easily fall into stride with professed religious, and remain so absorbed in

his own thoughts and prayers as to be scarcely conscious of the world around him. We can well believe that he loved the silence and discipline of Merton after the incessant strife of tongues in the wild University, that the sweet chanting of the offices and the long leisurely worship of a community who made it the whole business of their life was a refreshment to this mystic who had only secured time for prayer by stealing hours from his sleep-time in a dark and empty church after each laborious day.

It was Edmund's habit to retire to monasteries, as a tired man might go home for a holiday when worn out by the strain of work ; he stubbornly opposed the monks of Canterbury when he became Archbishop, not because he was a secular and therefore out of sympathy with the monastic life, but because the Canterbury monks were bad religious, absorbed with mundane interests and unfaithful to the spirit, if not the letter, of their rule. When at Oxford, he spent his Christmas with the monks at Reading, and the last scene of his life is his retirement to the Abbey of Pontigny. Yet these visits were never times of relaxation ; always he lived among the monks as if he were himself bound by their strict obligations ; in fact he put them to shame by his example. At Reading, though Christmas was a season when some indulgence was traditional, his presence spurred on the monks to live more strictly ; " look-

ing upon themselves as slothful and lukewarm by comparison with him, they began to blush for their own lack of fervour, and in imitation of so great a man to lead a life more mortified than had been their custom." Even as an old man near his end he amazed the stark Cistercians of Pontigny by his ascetic devotion.

Yet his long period of retirement at Merton seems to need some explanation. It is most likely that he came home from Paris before the end of the great Interdict of 1209 to 1214, "when," as Green tells us, "all worship save of a few privileged orders, all administration of the Sacraments save that of private baptism, ceased over the length and breadth of the country : the church bells were silent, and the dead lay unburied on the ground." It is possible that this picture may be overdrawn ; the Interdict is not mentioned by St. Edmund's chroniclers, and the learned Dom Wallace, the modern historian of the saint, does not refer to it at all, but recalls that Oxford was empty from 1209 to 1214 in consequence of a migration of students as a protest against the execution of several scholars who were hanged because a scholar practising at archery had accidentally shot an Oxford woman.

It would fit the facts very well if we suppose that Edmund, now a man of about thirty-five, had returned with his Master's degree of the University of Paris, which conferred the *jus*

ubique docendi, only to find that there was no work for him to do in Oxford. After so many strenuous years God may have prepared for him a time of solitude and peace, and it is certain that he entered on this retreat as a preparation for his new work of lecturing in theology.

Somewhere about this time in his life (there is no reason why it may not have been just before his retirement to Merton) Mabel Rich once more intervenes. Hitherto Edmund's scholastic interests had been entirely secular, he had been absorbed by the seven liberal arts included in the "Trivium," which embraced grammar, rhetoric, and logic, and the "Quadrivium," which consisted of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. Mathematics especially attracted him, and he seems to have got mathematical problems "on the brain," so that he dreamed of them, and in his dream he was drawing geometrical figures on the ground. It is doubtful if the good Mabel would have cared much for this. The ignorance of the times suspected mathematics as being akin to magic, and in later days two of Edmund's pupils, Grosseteste and Roger Bacon, were both credited with supernatural powers because of their skill in this science. "Friar Bungay," wrote an ecclesiastical historian, "had a profound knowledge of mathematics, which he owed either to the inspiration of the demon or to the teachings of Roger Bacon." To Edmund, thus dreaming of mathe-

metics—the suspected art in which the paynim Saracens were skilled—his dead mother appeared and asked the meaning of his occupation. When he explained what he was doing she took his right hand and drew thereon three circles, on which she wrote the three Names—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And when she had done this she said: “My dearest son, in future study such figures and no other.” Other matters, she said, contributed little to the end for which he had been born, and she begged him, as one who had never deceived him yet, to trust her and obey her wish.

After this vision Edmund, “who had lectured in Arts for six years with wonderful success” (whether at Paris or Oxford is not clear), undertook the study of Holy Scripture, and as he gained an understanding of it “all that he had learned previously he accounted mere mud and bricks.”

There is no doubt that this story is characteristic. He still remains the dutiful son with the habit of obedience strong upon him. It was his mother who started him both in the practice of ascetic virtue and in the pursuit of learning; it was her memory which guided him in this new crisis of his life. For a crisis it was. In Edmund the scholar and the saint struggled for mastery; if he was spared temptation to the grosser sins we can well imagine that his eager mind, blazing out new trails in the fascinating world of rediscovered learning, too easily became absorbed by the

scholar's passion for his work. He who "studied as if he was to live for ever" was letting the years slip by and allowing his intellect to become the servant to ends lower than the highest—while his true vocation, "the end for which he had been born," remained untried. So Mabel called him back to it. Dom Wilfred Wallace has proved that the arms assumed by St. Edmund when he became Archbishop were "*Azure on three suns in splendour proper, as many annulets gules.*" The three suns represent the Blessed Trinity, the field is azure to represent heaven, the three rings or annulets stand for the three circles which Mabel in his vision drew upon his hand. These arms were discovered in a sixteenth-century book at the Heralds' Office containing the arms of saints.

Another of St. Edmund's dreams well illustrates his subconscious nature. He had a great devotion to our Lady and St. John the Evangelist, and in their honour he made it a rule to recite daily a long and beautiful prayer of his own composition invoking the aid of these two saints, known from its opening words as *O intemerata*, which appears in many medieval manuals of devotion. After one specially busy day of study he forgot to keep this rule, and on the following night he saw St. John "as one angered and terrible, with uplifted arm holding a rod, and threatening a very grievous stroke upon the hand

which at the Saint's bidding he held out, trembling with fear." Then the dream changed and the Saint's countenance beamed with love, but he laid upon Edmund a solemn command to put off whatever business of any kind he had in hand rather than omit this act of devotion. If dreams are an index to character, this, like the dream about Mabel, seems to show the influence of a tense conflict between the claims of work and prayer, and a consciousness that his devotions stood in danger of being crowded out.

It is also a scholar's nightmare recalling the fears of boyhood's days to one trained in stern schools under severe masters, the dream of one who feared the rod as St. Augustine feared it when he too was young.

There is something almost comic and undignified in the picture of Edmund holding out his hand to his patron saint as to an incensed schoolmaster, but Edmund was ever a humble person, little given to striking heroic attitudes. The tale recalls Alcuin's well-known story of Bede, who said "I know that angels visit the canonical hours and the congregation of the brethren. What if they do not find me among them? Will they not say, Where is Bede? Why comes he not to the prescribed devotions of the brethren?"

In Edmund as in Bede the sense of duty, formed by external discipline, had grown to be a strong

internal compulsion reinforced by a lively sense of the real presence of the heavenly witnesses of his interior life.

If it was Mabel who started him on his career as a theologian, she set his feet on the path which led him to the Primate's throne.

Curiously enough there is no record of the date of his ordination to the priesthood ; it was not till some time after the earliest canonical age, though indeed it was not postponed till so late as was the case with his friend St. Richard. Edmund appears as a priest in Oxford, but we do not know when he was ordained.

Edmund threw himself with his accustomed energy into the fresh and congenial study of theology, and if, as seems probable, he took up work in Oxford immediately after the lifting of the Interdict, he must have brought a great access of strength and prestige to the reopened University. He was now at the height of his powers, with all the training and culture that Paris had to give, a man who had found his vocation and poured into his work the pent-up force of every faculty which he possessed.

The two strains of his character, that of the scholar and the saint, could now combine, and the next eight years may well have been the happiest in his life.

Such a man as he could make theology live, for the study of that queen of sciences apart from

a life of devotion is an arid or even a soul-killing business, and Edmund lectured not only to instruct but to convert as well. Since his mother's death, with the fees of his pupils to help him, he was well provided for, so he built a little chapel near the city wall (close to the present Clarendon Building), where he heard or said mass daily, and he encouraged his pupils to follow his example before their day's work began.

He still kept up his lifelong custom of prolonged nocturnal prayers, and still, no doubt in consequence of his short nights, he seems constantly to have fallen into dreams. Thus once he dreamed that from a great fire lighted in his school seven burning torches were brought forth, and the next day an Abbot of the Cistercian Order entered his lecture room and left Edmund the poorer for seven of his best pupils, who then and there embraced the religious life. One of these seven, Stephen of Lexington, was a man of note in his generation, and subsequently became Abbot of Clairvaux. Another time Edmund dreamed, apparently in the lecture room itself before the arrival of his pupils, that the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove flew down to him from heaven bearing in its mouth the sacred Host, which, as though giving him Holy Communion, it placed within his lips. He lectured that day on the Holy Trinity like one inspired.

Men said that when he celebrated the Holy

Mass the corporal was wet with his tears, and the University which held him in such high esteem for learning recognised in him a saint as well. He took the usual fees for his lectures, but placed them in his window and gave them a kind of jesting burial, sprinkling the coins with dust and saying "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." And he never noticed if people played a trick on him and took them away.

Benefices came to him and he took them for short periods of time, so that his labours at Oxford were not quite continuous but relieved by one or two interludes of pastoral work as a parish priest.

One such benefice was a rich living offered him by the Archbishop, and he hesitated about accepting it, but hearing that the church was in a very neglected state he consented to go there for a time, "lest the Romans, or others like them who care nothing for the sheep of Christ, but only for their wool, should lay their hands upon it." He spent all the income of the benefice upon the church ; he enlarged the chancel, re-roofed the building and decorated it, purchased ornaments and everything else that was required, keeping nothing whatever for himself. Where this church was we do not know. Edmund probably left it a Norman building with a chancel in the new Early English style ; subsequent ages may have rebuilt it in accordance with a later

taste. Anyhow it was a rich living in the patronage of Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and rich benefices attracted Italian rectors who would put in a chaplain and live in affluence on the proceeds. Edmund was too good an Englishman not to hate this custom, and he waged stubborn warfare against it when he became Archbishop. It seems that while he served this living he had some trouble with a nobleman who invaded the rights of the Church. He promptly excommunicated him (though one wonders if he had the right to do so) ; the nobleman complained to the King, and the royal anger descended upon Edmund. "If the King banishes me," said Edmund, "I shall simply go to Paris and lecture on Holy Scripture. If he puts me to death I shall think it the greatest honour he can do to me." In these words flashes out a picture of the man. However, he hated litigation, and shortly after this experience he resigned and returned to his beloved University.

There is more than one incident which seems to show that Edmund was possessed of what are now called psychic powers, in the sense that he was in some way clairvoyant at the moment of men's deaths.

The following odd story is quoted in all the books about him. "One day, when on his way with a companion to his birthplace—that is, Abingdon—he beheld a field as it were entirely covered

by certain birds of a very dusky hue. Each of them marvelled at the vast number of the birds ; but his companion was overcome with a strong amazement and trembling. ' I am affrighted,' said he, ' and in fear beyond measure.' "

The Blessed Edmund told his friend to stand aside a little from the path and fortify himself with the sign of the Cross, " for we shall see what is the meaning of this portent of the multitude of birds." And after a while, as they looked, " those birds lifted up into the air a body quite black, not distinctly like a man or an animal in shape, and then at last suddenly the multitude of birds passed from sight even as a cloud."

The saint interpreted this to mean that a man at Chalgrove, where they were going, had just died, and that the shapeless mass round which the birds flew signified a soul which had shamefully disfigured the image of its Maker. " And when they came into the town they learned that at the very hour at which the Saint had spoken a certain man had passed from this world." Here seems to be a legend based on a sight common enough in the Thames valley, turned into something grotesque by the lack of the power of expressive description which is so typical of the chroniclers of Edmund's life.

Anyone who has seen a flight of migrating swallows wheeling in the air above Nuneham Woods will recognise what Edmund and his

friend must have witnessed, and if he should chance to be in the spot where they settle he might understand the astonishment they caused.

Mr. C. J. Cornish, in *The Naturalist on the Thames*, has described a great migration of birds down the river on "a dark dripping evening, between five and six o'clock. Immense flights of swallows and martins suddenly appeared, arriving, not in hundreds, but in thousands and tens of thousands, in clouds twisting round like soot in a smoke-wreath. . . . The flocks were travelling at a height at which they were quite invisible in the cloudy air, and from minute to minute they kept dropping down into sight, and so perpendicularly to the very surface of the river. . . . Soon the high-flying crowds of birds drew down, and swept for a few minutes low over the willows, with a sound like the rush of water in a hydraulic pipe. Then by a common impulse the whole mass settled down from end to end of the island, upon the osiers . . . like the black blight on beans." ¹ Given a pair of scholars not much more observant of nature than most of us are to-day, and far more prone to see the supernatural in the unusual, one can well imagine the amazement of Edmund's companion and a certain confusion of mind as to what they saw in the behaviour of "certain birds of a very dusky hue."

The thirteenth century was a period of great

¹ *The Naturalist on the Thames*, by C. J. Cornish, p. 65.

art and of intense intellectual activity ; but that art was architecture, not letters, and the intellectual strivings of the age found an outlet in science rather than in literature. In the Universities the arts of the "Quadrivium," namely music, geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy, were more highly esteemed than those of the "Trivium," which were grammar, logic, and rhetoric. This meant that the study of the use of words, the writer's task of literature, was looked upon as a mental exercise for boys. The world was busy doing things and making things, men were ambitious of achieving something practical, and Mr. T. F. Tout tells us of this period that "Science nearly killed literature." The study of Canon Law led to a career in which a man could serve his age, gain leadership and mastery and the government of affairs, and Law, in the words of Dr. Rashdall, is "the application of science to the regulation of social life." Mathematics was a handmaid to the master art which absorbed so much of the energies of the century ; it enabled builders to tackle the engineering problems of the architect. Men were too busy to cultivate the art of describing what they did, and we can get closer to the heart of the thirteenth century in the choir of Lincoln or in Salisbury Cathedral than in the pages of Matthew Paris. These men lived and fought heroically, they built like the inspired artists which they were,

they produced great saints and tremendous sinners, but they did not know how to describe either. They worked like Titans but they wrote like schoolboys, and the art of history shows no kind of advance on the level reached by the Venerable Bede. The chronicles in which the life of St. Edmund is written are voluminous but tedious to a degree, prosy, jejune, and so full of clichés and conventional phrases that it requires some effort of imagination to remember that their subject is a real being of flesh and blood.

The mere fact that Edmund was a saint, while it inspires enthusiasm in his chroniclers, inclines them to draw his picture according to convention rather than in a realistic way. Perhaps this was unavoidable, for the greater part of his life, the world in which he was most truly at home and where his heart was, was that silent world of the spirit where no human observer can follow him. Compared with such a man as his friend Robert Grosseteste, he moves across the stage of history like a being who is not wholly of this world.

One would not willingly miss this picture of him in the evening light amid the swirling clouds of swallows, conscious of things which his companion could not know and seeing beneath the rush and vanishing of innumerable wings that distant deathbed where at that moment some unhappy soul was passing into the dark.

CHAPTER V

EDMUND TREASURER OF SALISBURY AND PREACHER OF THE CRUSADE

EDMUND's long and happy labours in the University came to a close just about the time when the Friars first arrived. Twelve Dominicans reached Oxford a year before he left it, and the star that was to dominate the world of learning was only a little below the horizon, for in the year that Edmund was preaching the Crusade St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Dominican, was born. Two years after he left Oxford, in 1224, arrived the first Franciscans, and these two Orders found at once a powerful patron in Robert Grosseteste, the Chancellor of the University.

It was in 1222 that St. Edmund resigned his chair of theology to become Treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral, a post which he held for twelve years until he was elected to the see of Canterbury, and this severance with University life marks the close of the first chapter in his life.

To be Treasurer of Salisbury at the time when the present Cathedral was being built might seem

a position of serious financial responsibility, but this would hardly have been appropriate to Edmund ; nothing, in fact, could be more incongruous than to associate him with work requiring a business head ; the title is a little deceptive.

The office of Treasurer involved the care of the Cathedral treasure, its jewelled books with their precious illuminated pages, its reliquaries, vestments, crosses, censers, and the furniture of all its altars ; its holder had the overseeing of its sacristans, the care of its bells, and saw to the provision of its lights, but the burden of collecting and administering the vast sums necessary for the building would have been shared by the corporate body.

The moment of Edmund's arrival at Salisbury is important, for it enables us to connect him with two great landmarks in the inner history of our Church—the rise of Gothic architecture and the development of the famous medieval Use of Sarum.

He came to his new office when the building of the present Cathedral was in full swing ; it had begun two years before his appointment, but though it was not completed in his lifetime, three altars were consecrated with great solemnity and a part of the building was dedicated for divine service in 1225, when he was still its Treasurer. So well did he discharge his duties that he set the standard for the future Treasurers, who were

bound to "maintain the additional number of lights, exactly and without diminution, as is well known was generously practised by our beloved son, Master Edmund."

The Bishop under whom Edmund Rich served was by a freak of coincidence named Richard Poor. It was he who moved the site of Salisbury Cathedral from the riotous and uncongenial neighbourhood of a royal castle at Old Sarum to its present situation. The Cathedral, then, was eloquent of new beginnings ; what Mr. Chesterton has called "the Gothic going up like a flight of arrows" was a transition from an older style of architecture, and was itself the product and token of a new spirit in men's thoughts and ways.

The great Benedictine age of cathedral building, with its immense naves for the monastic processions and its enclosed choirs in which the monks sang their office, was over. Salisbury was the work of secular clergy, and the whole appearance of this great building, produced in one outburst of creative energy, was something new in England, rich as that land already was in great churches.

It belongs to a period when bishops rather than monks were the great builders ; at the same time were rising the nave and choir of Lincoln, the west fronts of Peterborough and Wells, and Bishop Poor went on to Durham to build the

“ nine altars ” of that great Cathedral of the North.

Edmund had already shown his zeal in such matters by his restoration and furnishing at his own cost of the church which he had served as rector, and this may have weighed with those who called him to Salisbury when they had so great a task in hand ; it is, at any rate, evidence that he loved and understood the master arts in which his age excelled.

Moreover, the great liturgical work known as St. Osmond's Register, embodying that Sarum Use which gradually came to supersede all the earlier “ uses ” of York, Hereford, Bangor, and Lincoln, was at this time being re-edited and revised, and in this work there is little doubt that Edmund himself had a personal share ; for part of it at least his office of Treasurer would give him a direct responsibility. The revision of the Register was a task demanding exact and specialised scholarship, and the Salisbury Chapter must have been glad to make use of a theologian fresh from the seat of learning.

The Register destined to be the classic standard of English worship for many generations prescribed in detail how the divine offices were to be performed at the different seasons and on all the various solemnities of the ecclesiastical round.

Ritual, the elaborated interlacing scheme of prayer, lection, and song, reflecting the changing

scenes of the pageant of the Church's year, and ceremonial, prescribing the conduct of every action in the great drama of worship, were arts, as architecture was an art, and the same sense of beauty which inspired the Chapter's masons also informed their music and their intricate liturgical observances. The men who planned this lovely house of God on so magnificent a scale, resplendent, we must remember, with gilding and colour from floor to vaulting, at the same time revised the conduct of their services because they were determined to make the worship which was to be the life of the new building, for which indeed it was erected, as beautiful and stately, as full of thought-out perfection in every detail, as the great church which was to be its background and setting.

These two great tasks, the building of a cathedral in a style so strongly contrasted with the massive Romanesque of an earlier day, and the editing and perfecting of the Use of Sarum, must count for a good deal in our conception of the legacy which Edmund left to the world, although at this distance of time we cannot estimate what share in these corporate undertakings can be assigned to him.

Elias of Derham was the *Magister Fabricae* of Salisbury, but a medieval cathedral was not one architect's work in the same sense that modern churches are ; it was the product of a group mind

in which mason and ecclesiastic, artist and churchman, pooled their ideas and aspirations and, by some common wave of quickened inspiration, evolved fresh forms from long inherited traditions. It is as if their prayers and thoughts of God and of the new Jerusalem materialised themselves in stone, in colour, movement, and music. No intelligent man, far less a scholar so alert as Edmund and a saint so burning with the love of God as he, can have failed to throw himself ardently into this great enterprise. Edmund was living for twelve years at the centre of a great creative period of architecture and of liturgical development : this is all that we can say about it ; but Salisbury Cathedral tells us there were giants in England in those days, and history tells us that he was one of them.

The position which Edmund now occupied brought him into contact with a new world. We hear of him as spiritual director to several great ladies, one of whom was Eleanor, King Henry's sister, and another Ela, Countess of Salisbury, afterwards Abbess of Laycock. One of the most memorable of his achievements was the conversion of Ela's husband, William, surnamed Longsword, a typical hard-bitten soldier of the period. His mind is said by the Chronicles to have been " fierce, like that of the brutes," and we may well believe it, for he was half-brother to King John. He was also notorious for his

disregard of the duties of religion, and it was a long time since he had been to confession or received the Body of Christ. But Edmund tamed him. "I believe," said the Earl to his wife, "that that man is truly a saint," and when he became converted he was content with no half-measures.

It is told that when William Longsword lay dying and the Bishop came to bring him the Viaticum he threw himself out of bed on to the floor, stripped off his clothes and put a halter round his neck, loudly proclaiming himself a traitor to the King of Heaven, and confessed his sins.

In those days there were bishops who wore armour and rode to battle ; but they did not advance the cause of Christ by becoming like the world around them ; it was the gentle scholar saint who broke down the fierce antagonism of this redoubtable man of the sword.

In order to support his position at Salisbury Edmund was given the benefice or prebend of Calne, where he was permitted by the statutes to reside for four months in the year. He seems to have availed himself willingly of this privilege, not only for the sake of quiet and retirement but also in order to economise.

He was now receiving a considerable income from his benefice, but he was a deplorable administrator, and spent so much on alms and keeping open house that he was frequently in

debt ; indeed he had to throw himself from time to time on the hospitality of an old Oxford pupil, Stephen of Lexington, at that time Abbot of Stanley, near Calne, "until his croppes came." Edmund had every virtue save those of a business man ; his generosity would have horrified the Charity Organisation Society, and he never applied his skill in mathematics to a calculation of his income and expenditure.

The Abbot good-naturedly lectured Edmund and pointed out the advantage of keeping accounts, but Edmund only answered that he wished to avoid scandal, and could never bear to have it said that churchmen were avaricious. Ecclesiastics had this reputation : that is why Edmund felt so strongly on the subject. Moreover, at this time the four "personae" of the Cathedral—the dean, the precentor, the chancellor, and the treasurer—were giving up one-fourth of their stipend to the building fund of their new church, and the taxes levied on rich churchmen by King and Pope were crushing. So by an irony of fate Edmund, now in possession of large emoluments, had never been so burdened with financial worries in his life before. On himself he never spent anything at any time : it was a saying of his that the time spent in eating, sleeping, and riding was time wasted ; but now his position and his generous nature forced him to keep a hospitable table. He played the part of

host with courtesy, and sat talking genially with his guests while making a polite pretence to share the dishes put before them ; it is recorded that he always allowed mimes and jesters for the entertainment of his guests, though he himself did not care for them. He was obviously a good host, an amusing talker, and had the charm of a great gentleman.

Apart from his duties at the Cathedral, Edmund's post at Salisbury called into play a fresh side of his character and developed powers hardly to be expected in one whose training had been so exclusively academic, for at this time he became a preacher whose "repute spread beyond the Alps and, reaching Rome, came to the ears of the Pope." The result was a papal command to preach the crusade over a large area of the west of England, in the countries of Somerset, Gloucester, Hereford, Worcester, and Oxford. This was the crusade proclaimed at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 by Innocent III and renewed at the accession of Gregory IX in 1227. The numbers who joined it were immense, and it is said that from forty to sixty thousand sailed from England alone. We do not know how many came back !

The post of a lecturer in theology does not in itself suggest the possession of the power to sway great multitudes in a monster recruiting campaign, but the event proved that the Pope

had been well advised in his choice of a missionary, since the fame of Edmund's preaching became legendary. It was this year's work which brought him before the public eye and was the cause of his election to the see of Canterbury six years later on. Something of the aura of a saint, that strange magnetic attractiveness which never failed to kindle a response in the thirteenth century, must already have been recognised in the Treasurer of Salisbury ; the power that conquered William Longsword was not mere skill in disputation nor the construction of unanswerable syllogisms ; but we must allow to Edmund other gifts besides the power of sanctity. His new task demanded great gifts of popular appeal, a voice that could reach multitudes in the open air, and the capacity to sway the hearts of ignorant and rough, unlettered men. The Latin of the schools would be useless here, or even the French which was the language of the ruling classes. These would be English sermons preached in the vernacular. Edmund obviously threw himself with all his heart into the preaching of this crusade : it would appeal to him as a great counter-charge against the menace of infidelity which Islam represented, corresponding in the field of action to that battle of ideas which was waged in the intellectual warfare of the Universities. Besides this it constituted something like a great National Mission, a call to repentance and self-oblation, and a great

opportunity for converting souls and kindling love for the Lord Christ.

The chroniclers tell us about this campaign almost incidentally, on account of the miracles, or what seemed to be miracles, which attended the saint's preaching, for miracles interested them much, whereas the preaching of a crusade, about which we should like to know more, was a matter they could take for granted as well understood.

This is the kind of story that they tell.

While St. Edmund was preaching at Oxford during the Rogation Days in the churchyard of All Saints', a dense black cloud gathered above the people's heads and it began to rain. But Edmund bade his congregation "Stay in the name of God, and I will ask my Lord that the devil may have no power to interrupt my sermon." They stayed, and the south side of the street was running with water, but on the side on which those who were listening to him stood there fell no rain at all. Similar tales are told of sermons which he preached on the borders of Wales, in Hereford, Worcester, and elsewhere. The weather, though threatening, never interrupted him.

One point is clear, namely, that all these sermons were delivered out of doors, always a risky proceeding in our English climate. The reason for this was probably that the congregations were too large for the churches to contain them,

for all the faithful without exception were bound under pain of ecclesiastical censure to attend, but even if it had not been so the subject would attract as nothing else could do. Not the devout only, but the feudal lords and all their retainers, men of all ranks, including many who cared as little as William Longsword for church-going, were swept away by the tide of religious fervour and sympathy with their oppressed fellow-Christians that ran through Europe at this time.

The Crusades belong to that bygone world so full of curious contrasts and contradictory tendencies, of half-blind impulses to gigantic ideals only dimly understood and restless migratory wanderings. There are few stranger contrasts than that between the gentle scholar-saint and the actual events of the great holy war which he helped to set in motion. Characteristically Edmund declined to make use of the faculties granted for levying fees from the churches where he preached. It would have seemed as incongruous to him as to St. Bernard to be paid for preaching the Gospel.

To this period of his life belongs another of those uncanny stories which give us glimpses of the supernatural atmosphere in which he lived. So far as one can reconstruct the tale, which is a little hard to understand, it runs as follows. His secretary, probably at Calne, found on one stormy night in winter that Edmund had left the

house and betaken himself to the church. Now the orders were that a light should always be kept in readiness for the saint at whatever time he might want to rise. He had, as we know, a life-long habit of nocturnal prayer ; he had also the scholar's need for midnight oil. This night the light was not forthcoming ; the secretary went all over the house, the kitchen, and other household offices in quest of one, but presumably the fire was out, for he failed. He then traversed the village from house to house, and at last, at the far end of it, he found a light shining, at which he lit his lantern. It seems from the sequel that this light was burning in the room where a dead man lay.

The secretary on returning discovered Edmund at the church, fresh from a vision. He had seen all the tombs in the churchyard open and the bodies of the dead rise up above the ground as far as to their waists. Among them one, whom the sign of the tonsure showed to be a priest, spoke to his fellows and bade them pray for the soul of a man who while he lived had been kind to the dead. He recited the *De Profundis* with his ghostly congregation and also the Lord's Prayer and the collect. Then saying " May we rest in peace ! " to which the others responded " Amen," he and his fellow dead sank back into their graves. When Edmund learned where the secretary had got the light he told him that the man from whose

candle it was kindled had been wont to go round with a bell, begging prayers for the souls of the departed.

It is in the setting of this unusual ghost story that its main interest lies. Edmund may have had no fires in winter, but he was particular about having a light to read by at any time of night. Also his servant or secretary knew that he must provide what his master wanted—even if he had to go and hunt all over the village in the middle of a stormy night for it. We seem to see in Edmund at this time a little of the stern disciplinarian, the teacher accustomed to demand obedience and protect his hours of work. It was at Calne that envoys from Canterbury came to announce his election as Archbishop. His household were much excited at the happy news and clapped their hands. One of his “more familiar servants” burst into Edmund’s room while he was at his studies, crying “Behold, my Lord, the monks of Canterbury are here to bring you news of your election, made unanimously, as Archbishop of Canterbury.” He hoped, says the chronicler, “to receive something for announcing the good news, as is customary on such occasions.” But Edmund, looking up from his books, sternly told him to be off to his proper business, “And shut the door after you. Take care no one comes and interrupts me while I am at work.” The crest-fallen servant had to ask the envoys to wait, since

his master was engaged, and wait they did till "in his accustomed manner, at his usual time, neither earlier nor later, he came out to them."



CONSECRATION OF ST. EDMUND
From a drawing by Matthew Paris

The see of Canterbury had been vacant nearly three years, there had been endless intrigues and wire-pulling, three elections had been annulled, and it had at last been suggested by the Pope himself that they should elect "Master Edmund

of Abingdon, a man of eminent learning and sanctity, and a lecturer in theology."

There was more than the conventional display of humility in Edmund's extreme unwillingness to accept the office. He had been a man under authority so long that there was no lust for leadership in his character. It was only the argument that if he refused he would be guilty of mortal sin which prevailed upon him to consent. They conducted him to the high altar of the church, prostrated themselves with him on the ground, and sang *Te Deum* while the bells of the church rang out triumphantly for joy.

But there was little joy in Edmund's heart. Anselm and Becket and Stephen Langton were hard men to follow. He who went to Canterbury went to a post of toil and danger if he went as one determined to keep his ideals pure and do his duty. The king was always trying to evade the obligation of the Great Charter which he had sworn to obey, and the land was torn with faction ; the Church was threatened with domination by powerful and unscrupulous foreigners and drained of its resources by the steady pressure of demands from overseas. The estates of the Archbishopric were seriously impoverished, and on every side there were abuses to be rectified and battles to be fought. The battles were in the cause of righteousness and England's liberties, but Edmund had none of the temperament nor

aptitude of a born fighter. No wonder he shrank from the dangerous honour thrust so unexpectedly upon him. He could choose no more valiant motto than that which placed on the lips of the martyred St. Thomas the words "*Eadmundum doceat mors mea ne timeat.*"

CHAPTER VI

EDMUND ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

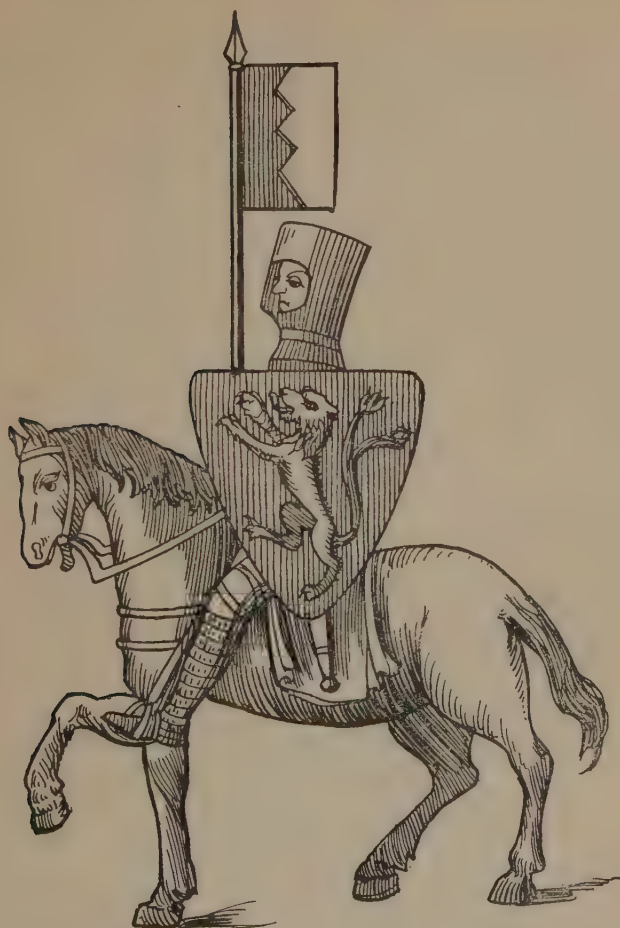
ST. EDMUND, when he was so unexpectedly raised to the Archbishopric, was a man of about fifty-three and had seven years yet to live. Any attempt to write the story of those seven years at all adequately would take one deeper into English history than this little book cares to venture, for his life, which had hitherto been passed in quiet places, is now caught up into the confusion of a period of tangled politics and shares the stage with figures far more famous than himself.

His tenure of office is a record of endurance rather than of great accomplishment.

The rôle of leadership and commanding genius was played by Robert Grosseteste, his friend and former fellow-student, who exercised from the see of Lincoln a more active influence upon the troubled Church and realm than either Edmund or his successor in the see of Canterbury. But Grosseteste was not only "one of the great encyclopædic thinkers of the world," he was a politician ; the task of Edmund was to suffer

for our Lord, and though suffering is the highest type of action, its value is too supernatural and subtle to form a theme for the historian's pen : it earned him his canonisation in a remarkably brief period after his death, but it has left little impression on modern memories. The world being what it was, and he possessing the character he did, no other result of his life was possible, for, as has been said, he is one of those whom our Lord sends as lambs into the midst of wolves, and the wolves of his day were hungry and formidable. He may not have combined in equal proportion the protective wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove, but no tact or subtlety could have evaded the issues he was called to face. He was a man who could never compromise, nor twist his principles in order to accommodate conscience to the exigencies of practical politics, yet his lot was cast in an age which saw no harm in squaring the most exalted theories with entirely inconsistent practice.

Edmund hated litigation to such a degree that he stipulated expressly, when he took a benefice, that he should be exempt from any share in lawsuits ; he seems to have resigned his first benefice after he had been obliged to stand up for the rights of the Church, lest he should be drawn into tedious forensic business, but now that he was Archbishop he was never free from lawsuits. It was not for nothing that most of his



SIMON DE MONTFORT

contemporaries at the University were studying Canon Law and Civil Law, since litigation, with endless suits carried to the Papal Courts, was one of the favourite occupations of the day.

It is the unhappy lot of an Archbishop to decide how far the law of the Church can be relaxed in the case of exalted personages, specially in matters matrimonial, and Edmund was utterly unaccommodating. Simon de Montfort, for instance, might be a great factor in the political world and a man of the noblest qualities ; his Lady might be the King's sister ; but neither of these circumstances could alter the fact that Eleanor, Countess de Montfort, widow of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, had sworn before him solemn vows of perpetual chastity and broken them. The Pope might overlook the sacrilege and grant a dispensation after the event for reasons of high policy, but in Edmund's eyes a vow made to God was a promise that could not be broken by any man nor any woman were she of humble or of royal birth. Accordingly de Montfort was no friend of his, and he looked on his offence as heinous. Simon de Montfort was the champion of many ideals with which Edmund was in sympathy. Politically the University sided with him, and a regiment of ragged students fought under his banner at Lewes ; the Franciscans, whom he zealously supported, loved him ; he, like Edmund, was representative of the best and

most progressive tendencies of his age—a man moved by religious motives none the less sincere because fanatical; above all, both he and his wife were close friends with Grosseteste. But he was a mixed and inconsistent character; the loftiness of his political foresight and the courage with which he withstood the weakness and folly of the King could not atone for the violation of a solemn vow which in Edmund's judgment stained his married life.



ST. EDMUND AS PEACEMAKER
BETWEEN HENRY II AND ELEANOR

There is more to be said for Edmund's stubborn attitude than appears at first sight. It is easy to sneer at the Archbishop who declined to wink at a mere ecclesiastical impediment to marriage between a heroic patriot and a princess, but we must remember that the sanctity of oaths counted for much in days when contracts had no other safeguards. To treat such vows as negligible or lightly to be set aside would go far to undermine the foundations of a social order already perilously unstable. Those who worked for righteousness, whether in the political or in the social sphere, were engaged in a constant struggle to force men and women, and especially to compel kings and nobles, to keep vows which they had solemnly undertaken but earnestly desired to break. Feudal society rested on the binding force of oaths of fealty; hatred of lying and oath-breaking was inherent even in pre-Christian Saxon codes of morals. When such a man as William Longsword saw the evil of his life, his primitive moral sense accused him, not of cruelty or lust, but of being "a traitor to the king of Heaven"—that is, of being a vassal of Christ who had broken his oath of loyalty to his great Overlord.

The administration of their primitive courts of justice, the keeping of their business contracts, the coherence of their national and political life all depended finally upon the binding force of

oaths solemnly taken before God. Moreover, Eleanor had been a penitent of Edmund's, and though all England knew that she had made her vows in his presence and probably adopted some distinctive dress in public token of those vows, no one but he could know all that had passed between them.

At the time of the Crusades all Europe teemed with desolate women, and Eleanor's case was representative of the difficulty felt in that rough and turbulent age of affording protection for defenceless widows. At the beginning of the thirteenth century arose on the Continent the institution of *beguinages*, settlements semi-monastic in character providing a home for widows to live in community, devoted to religion, without being entirely separated from the world. England had no such institutions, but vows of chastity taken by widows were common and were respected.

The very prominence of the delinquents made Edmund more stern in his denunciation of their sin, and quite possibly his knowledge of Eleanor's mind at the time when she took the vow intensified his horror at her guilt. His last action, when he left his native land for ever, on reaching the top of a hill near London which some think may have been Blackheath, was to raise his hand in blessing over his beloved country and then to pronounce a solemn malediction on the Countess Eleanor and on her offspring. The

world noted with awe how this doom was fulfilled. Eleanor's eldest son fell at Evesham along with his father, her two younger sons died excommunicate after a crime which sent a shudder throughout Europe and earned for Guy de Montfort a place in Dante's *Inferno*. They murdered their cousin, Henry of Almaine, son of the King of the Romans, in a church at Viterbo during Mass ; Guy, the younger of the two, dragged the dying man into the street and pierced him with his sword. "He in God's bosom," wrote Dante, "smote the heart which yet is honoured on the banks of Thames" (*Inferno*, Canto xii. 118).

Eleanor retired to a Dominican nunnery at Montargis after her husband's death and ended her days there—it may be that the *cause célèbre* of Henry of Almaine's murder inspired the story of St. Edmund's curse.

The tragedy of Edmund's position lay in the fact that he found himself compelled by conscience not only to oppose men with whom he was in many points in sympathy, but also institutions for which he had the deepest reverence. By nature and training, like all English Catholics of his time, he looked on the Papacy as the high champion of the rights of Christendom, endowed with the awful prerogatives which Hildebrand had claimed for it. He was prepared to give the enthusiastic loyalty and glad submission to which

his temperament inclined him, which discipline had ingrained in his very nature, to the Holy Father tending the flock of Christ from St. Peter's chair ; in practice he found that he was expected to aid the Pope to shear his English sheep unmercifully and sell them to unfaithful shepherds. But this he would not do. He would yield his precedence in all meekness to the Papal Legate, but not even at the Pope's own bidding would he betray the welfare of his people to the greed of foreigners.

To him a monastery meant all that Merton Abbey stood for in his life, a place of holy poverty, humility, and the service of God in never-ceasing prayer, but the monks of Canterbury were to show him another side of things—the obstinate selfishness of a close corporation bitterly jealous of its rights and greedy of every opportunity of aggrandisement. Nor could a man of Edmund's simple and sincere consistency ever work happily with a King so utterly vacillating and unstable as Henry III. Yet Henry was not lacking in noble instincts.

Three great powers had thrust the Archbishopric upon Edmund : the Pope whose nominee he ultimately was, the monks of Canterbury who in fact elected him, and the King who accepted his election. Each of them followed their own imperious needs and interests ; each of them expected a certain complaisance, a reason-

able facility of accommodation to their policies and points of view from the meek scholar whom they had raised to the throne of St. Augustine. But they mistook their man.

For saints are unaccommodating people, excessively inconvenient to live with in an evil world where Christian principles have to be elastic if they are to square with politics and economic laws, almost impossible to be endured by a Church heavy with wealth and embarrassed with mundane ambitions. We get the impression of a gradually growing sickness of heart, a progressive agony of resistance to forces which he could neither make alliance with nor overrule. A tragedy was bound to come, and it took seven long years before it reached its climax at Pontigny.

Edmund had found his glebe at Calne a troublesome responsibility, but now, as Archbishop, he had to administer immense estates, including twenty-six manors much impoverished through fraud and negligence during the long vacancy of the see.

Dilapidations ran him into heavy debt, and the fees payable on his election and consecration must have further increased the anxieties of this very unbusinesslike scholar.

There were tenants to be proceeded against for rent, and Edmund was torn between a conscience that made him a faithful warden of the patrimony of Christ and a tender heart that made

him hate to subject others to the severity of the law. Thus when a delinquent knight was fined a considerable sum after a lawsuit about one of his manors, Edmund distributed the fine among the man's four daughters, "to get them marriage portions."

When according to the law he received a "heriot"—that is, the best animal from the estate of a deceased tenant—he always listened to the natural complaints of the widow. "My good woman," he would say, speaking to her in English, "this is the law of the land, and custom demands that thy lord should receive the best animal which thy husband had when alive." Then turning to his retinue he would say in French or Latin, "Truly this law was invented by the devil, not by God. After the poor woman has lost her husband, the best thing her dying husband had to leave her is taken away." He would then say to the widow "in his mother tongue," "If I lend you the animal, will you take good care of it for me?" Thus the requirements of the laws of man and God were satisfied, at the expense of the archiepiscopal estate.

His only temptation to extravagance, to which he yielded steadily and greedily, was the enormous number of poor persons who were by custom fed at the Archbishop's table and relieved by his bounty. Here he was lavish, and took endless pains about the manner of his charitable gifts, so

as to avoid hurting the self-respect of any gently nurtured persons in distress.

For his own part he lived like an ascetic in the midst of all his splendours, and earned the contempt of his servants by declining to be valeted. He insisted on putting on his own shoes, he wore the plainest clothes over the hair shirt to which Mabel had accustomed him, and he carried his own cross to his private chapel from his study. He seldom slept in his bed, and only rested before midnight ; he spent the hours from Matins till Prime in his oratory both in winter and summer. His household disliked all this exceedingly and complained of the standard which he set them. They could not live up to it, and some of them left his service ; but all this time his brother Robert was with him, and Richard de la Wych, his old friend and brother saint, was living with him as his chancellor.

For Richard had studied Canon Law at Bologna, and we may be sure that the rights of the Archbishopric were safe in his hands ; also he did all Edmund's business for him, and spared him as much as possible the tedium of the law.

The whole atmosphere in which he lived must have been utterly distasteful to Edmund. The saint whose scrupulous conscience about simony had sent him as a shy young scholar from convent to convent to find an abbess who would take in his pretty sisters Margaret and Alice without a

dowry now found himself obliged to decline as gracefully as he could presents of valuable plate from brother bishops who wanted a friend at court, or golden pyxes for his chapel offered with obvious ulterior motives. One cleric begged him to accept a magnificent bed, another a most expensive ring. "I have one ring," said Edmund, "and I do not want another." Did he mean that ring whose fellow he had offered to our Lady in St. Mary's Church at Oxford?

He forbade all his attendants, especially those who undertook the office of visitation, to accept any gifts, and any who accepted them he treated as excommunicate and made them give back what they had received.

By gifts of this kind, he declared, "the Christian religion is tampered with, and it will suffer for it unless by God's mercy men strive to rid themselves of this pestilence."

Edmund used to say that between "prendre" and "pendre" is only the difference of one letter; or it may have been Grosseteste, for the saying is ascribed to both.

The Church must indeed have been deeply infected with corruption when men tried to gain favour with the Archbishop himself in this bare-faced way; but justice was sold by the most unblushing bribery in every court from the Pope's downward.

We have had a glimpse of Edmund's mind on

another matter in the fact that he only accepted his first benefice during his Oxford days "for fear some Roman, or someone like the Romans, who care nothing for the sheep except their milk and wool, should lay greedy hands upon it." A man who talked like that as a young priest was bound to have a hard time when he got to Canterbury, for he would earn the hostility not only of wealthy private patrons who found it convenient to make friends abroad, but also of the most exalted personages, the King of England and, above all, the Pope himself. There is a letter from the Holy Father dated the very day after Edmund's consecration, full of wise advice as to the best means of inducing all who dwell in the kingdom of England, "both natives and subjects of other nations," to bear mutual charity towards one another, and giving an ominous intimation upon this very point. "You must warn Englishmen," said Gregory, "not to be jealous if foreigners obtain honours and benefices there. You must exhort all who are employed in the King's service to be loyal and devoted to his majesty"—a plain hint that King and Pope were agreed in a policy of conciliating foreigners with the wealth of the English Church, and that Edmund had better acquiesce and make no difficulties. Gregory "trusts that the favourable rumours he has heard of Edmund may be realised, and that the hopes he had conceived of

him may not be frustrated." The key to all this nasty business was the wealth which Englishmen's devotion had lavished on their Church. The possessor of many an English benefice could, if he chose, live like a prince upon its revenues, and if it was not convenient for him to reside, he could appoint a vicar at a small stipend to do the work while he enjoyed the emoluments abroad. At the seat of authority in Rome was the Holy Father, wise but very old, constantly at war, constantly in need of money to reward his followers and win the gratitude of useful men, pressed to desperation for lack of resources and none too well informed of the results of using England as his "milch-cow." Here was one steady and continuous cause of contention on a most vital point of principle. When other methods failed a legate was sent to England to expedite the golden flow ; he extorted larger and larger sums from the clergy, including a fifth of their movables from the prelates. Edmund resisted, struggled, gave way, and protested again. Then came a papal order that he should reserve the first three hundred benefices which fell vacant for Romans of the Pope's own nomination, and prohibiting any appointments till these requirements were satisfied.

At this final demand Edmund's heart broke : it was this which drove him to Pontigny.

The audacity of this exorbitant request, follow-

ing upon years of pleading, expostulation, resistance and concession, is a measure of the desperate need of the Papacy and of the insatiable and inexorable forces against which Edmund's strength was broken. There were excuses for Gregory, for at that time Frederic was approaching Rome, and the Roman citizens were wavering in their loyalty; the Pope had to win them at all costs, and the opulent English Church must help to fill his empty treasury. But here was the obstinate battle which Edmund, after struggles against hopeless odds, left as a legacy to his successors, and the same policy pursued with a stupid tenacity for three more centuries was to do more than drive one saint into exile. It was destined to drive the whole *Ecclesia Anglicana* into separation, and break the corporate unity of Western Christendom. Eventually it killed, so far as Rome was master of its life, the patient goose that laid these golden eggs.

It is said by Matthew Paris that the incomes of foreign clerks appointed by Innocent IV, after Edmund's death, amounted to seventy thousand marks, three times the revenue of the King of England.

We must not misunderstand St. Edmund's motives nor his point of view. He was the sort of man to defend the Church's treasure like a St. Lawrence as being a sacred trust for which he held himself responsible, but he would always

have sacrificed it gladly for the cause of Christ. Economic questions would never have come first with him, nor was he moved unduly by patriotic prejudice. The sense of nationality was very undeveloped then, and he could have little animus against a Frenchman because he was French, for the ruling caste in England were all French-speaking and seldom used the English tongue ; nor would he dislike a Roman because he was a foreigner, for he himself procured Franciscans from overseas to work in England. It was the spiritual interests of the flock of Christ that weighed with him. He could not bear to see the charge of precious souls committed to absentee rectors or to foreign careerists whose qualification for their charge was political astuteness rather than a pastoral heart or sanctity of life. England was groaning under these foreign adventurers.

Since days when Edmund had been a student in Paris one of the most powerful men in England had been Peter des Roches, the warden of the King's minority, a Poitevin favourite of John who became a power behind the throne in his successor's reign, the evil genius who appears in opposition to St. Edmund the Archbishop.

As we read of this sinister person in history it is only incidentally that we realise that he was Bishop of Winchester, the royal see, for more than thirty years. If saints then sometimes sat

on bishops' thrones, there were also bishops of a very different complexion.

Peter des Roches was a type of the political ecclesiastic of the thirteenth century. He was by turns statesman, financier, builder, military engineer, and ecclesiastic, but always and essentially a ruffian, a warrior who wielded the sword with the same dexterity as his scarcely less formidable crosier. Edmund's election was the signal for his downfall, and when eventually he appeared in disgrace before the King he wore a shirt of mail under his clerk's habit and carried a dagger at his belt. The King disarmed him with his own hands, and the chronicler hints that his Majesty took some risk in handling this formidable old prelate.

He was quite ready to use the weapon of assassination when other means failed him, and it was believed that he accomplished in this way the removal of Richard Marshall, whose murder shocked the public conscience at the time when Edmund began his period of office as Archbishop.

Peter was particularly busy in getting his creatures and fellow-countrymen into important ecclesiastical positions, and ran a candidate in the unseemly competition for the Archbishopric, out of which, on the failure of conflicting interests to win the day, St. Edmund's appointment had been arranged. He may be taken as a fair sample of

the kind of foreign churchman against whose evil influence Edmund had to struggle.

Another set of controversies which overshadowed Edmund's life brought him into direct opposition to the King. Henry succeeded to the throne after the monstrous nightmare of the reign of John, and disappointed his nation's hopes as only a well-meaning and weak-willed monarch could do.

It was one thing to force John to sign the first Charter, it was another to make him or Henry keep to it. The old grievance against which St. Thomas had protested with his life's blood broke out again, and clerics were summoned to appear before the lay tribunals. The clergy, a term which included all the professional class, in fact most educated men, did not love the King's courts, nor was their fear of them unreasonable. Let anyone who wants to realise what the King's justice meant, or had meant in the days just after Becket's death, read a contemporary account of a trial and sentence for theft quoted from Dr. Edwin Abbott's *St. Thomas of Canterbury* and printed in an Appendix to this book. Nothing more primitive in the method of judicial procedure, or more savage in the code of punishment, could be found in the tribal customs of darkest Africa. In this matter Edmund was the spearhead of a great body of English opinion. Grosseteste especially, with his great wisdom and

forceful character, was urging him to "Stand up like a brazen wall ; to act as leader in the camp of Israel."

But to narrate all his differences with Henry would take too much space.

According to the ideal, King and Archbishop should be like "two strong oxen who pull the plough of England," but while Edmund wished to plough a straight furrow, deviating not a hair's breadth from the line his conscience showed him, Henry, not without outbursts of Plantagenet rage, veered unexpectedly to right and left, and could never be depended on to keep in the same course of action for a month together.

Thus Edmund proved a sad disappointment to the Pope who had suggested his name, and to the King who had invested him ; but more disappointed still were the monks of Canterbury by whom he was actually elected.

This monastery was not unnaturally proud of a position which was unique in Europe, for they enjoyed the right of electing the Archbishop and Primate of all England—the *Papa alterius orbis*. They claimed the right to exercise archiepiscopal powers when the see was vacant, and after St. Edmund's death they excommunicated Robert Grosseteste with bell, book, and candle, to the unbounded indignation of that surprised prelate, but without other result. It was an evil inheritance which gave them this tremendous privilege,

for it inevitably meant that the monastery became the focus and hotbed of competing factions in the kingdom, the centre of an endless system of intrigue.

Moreover, their prestige, their corporate wealth, and privileges real and imagined, produced in them a most inordinate sensitiveness and pride.

To these "very clubbable" old gentlemen, living, one may suppose, something like the life of Fellows in an Oxford college of the unreformed days, only more numerous and powerful and even more tenacious of their dignities, came the quiet lecturer in theology whom they had set in the Primate's seat, in default of their first candidate, who was rejected by the Pope.

To their intense disgust he proved to have the strictest views of the religious life, and, far from proving a docile defender of their dignities, he proceeded to try to reform them, to bring their affairs into order, and make them live according to the true spirit of the Benedictine rule. Could anything be more vexatious? It is not to be supposed that the monks of Canterbury were in any way scandalous livers as we understand the term. They probably were sportsmen not averse to a little hunting, kept a good many servants, and interpreted their religious duties in a rather easy-going manner. They were demoralised by wealth and by the pervading spirit of intrigue,

and they were as astute and obstinate in the defence of their traditional privileges as most close corporations are. There were endless points of dispute. For instance, it fell to Edmund soon after his consecration to consecrate Robert Grosseteste as Bishop of Lincoln. No task can have been more congenial to him, for he knew Grosseteste well ; they had the bond of previous intimacy at Oxford between them, and the new Bishop of Lincoln had been Edmund's immediate predecessor in the benefice of Calne. These two friends worked together and thought alike on most things, and Grosseteste's more forceful personality was to stand behind the Archbishop all through his troubled reign. But this consecration afforded a serious cause of quarrel with the Canterbury monks. One of the rights which they had come to claim was that every suffragan bishop should be consecrated in the mother Cathedral of Canterbury which they served. For reasons which we can only guess, Edmund determined it should not be so, and he consecrated his friend at Reading, in the Lincoln Diocese, where was the great monastery of strict obedience which Edmund loved and used to visit in his Oxford vacations. This was an affront to the prestige of Canterbury, and something more practically inconvenient as well. The fees on such occasions were large and matter for dispute. Edmund had austere views upon such points. What the monks

may have looked upon as legitimate and customary payments he would probably call plain simony. At any rate Grosseteste was not consecrated under their roof, and he was not the only bishop whose fees they lost by Edmund's invasion of "the liberties of Canterbury." There were disputes about the election of their prior and their relation to the Archbishop; in fact they flouted Edmund's authority in every way they could till the convent buzzed about him like an angry hive. Here, in this comparatively minor and domestic quarrel, Edmund, who had to stand up for righteousness and justice against Pope and King, found the most formidable opponents of his whole career. For the monks had links with half the nobility in England, they had plenty of leisure, a genius for intrigue, and first-class brains at their disposal. If Edmund hated litigation it was meat and drink to them; and there was nothing they did not know about the backstairs politics of the Papal Court.

It was his dispute with the monks of Canterbury as much as anything else which forced Edmund, two years before his death, to make the journey to Rome in order to plead his cause in person at the Papal Court. And the monks were not too scrupulous in their methods. Though they had agreed to take no steps without his knowledge till the case was tried, as soon as he got to Rome he found the monks had been there

before him, and directly he left this country they started proceedings in the Court of the King's Bench behind his back. It came out at Rome that part of the monastery's claim was based on a forged document. "There is no kind of forgery," said the Archdeacon Simon Langton, Edmund's counsellor, "which is not perpetrated in the Church of Canterbury. They forge in gold, lead, wax, in anything you please." But the Pope was none too cordial on Edmund's side, and he was worsted in all essentials in the tangled legal business that ensued. The learned Benedictine, Father Ethelred Taunton, in his book, *The English Black Monks of St. Benedict*, devotes a good deal of space to this famous lawsuit, and with commendable loyalty to his Order protests that, from precisely the same data used by Father Wallace, Edmund's chief modern biographer, he comes to totally different conclusions. "It is no disrespect to the memory of a great saint," says Father Taunton, "to say he was not made of the stuff out of which a ruler is made, and was wanting in the tact so necessary for dealing with men." The unprejudiced reader would describe the quality needed for dealing with these particular monks by another name than tact, and it is not easy to swallow Father Taunton's defence that the charge of forgery (which is only a minor incident of the Canterbury monks' manœuvres) "turned out to be that an old charter of St.

Thomas à Becket, well known to exist, had been damaged beyond repair and that three of the monks in all simplicity had made a new copy, to which they had attached an old seal."

The whole business is quite clear. It is a particularly gross instance of the inconsistency between theory and practice which was one of the cardinal vices of the age. No one knew better than St. Edmund what a monastery ought to be, and no one more admired and revered the religious life; it is because he understood the spirit of St. Benedict so well that he was horrified at Canterbury. Edmund's failure in tact was that he tried to compel his monastery to live according to their rule, his failure to succeed was due to the betrayal of the cause of righteousness by the Pope. No appeal lay to any higher court on earth, and he was helpless. There is nothing further to be said.

It is clear that this presence of enemies at home, in his own cathedral city and among men of the profession which he so admired, must have been one of Edmund's most bitter afflictions. For he himself was far more like a true religious than his opponents were.

We are told that when he was at Rome on this occasion the Holy Father sent for him to an audience late in the evening while he was at his prayers. It was after Compline, and Edmund was accustomed, as he told the Pope, to keep

silence, as the Church advised, from Compline until Prime next morning. The Pope said with a smile, "You would make a good monk," to which Edmund answered heartily that he could wish he was one, for then he would be free of worldly cares and able to enjoy peace.

On another occasion during his stay in Rome he was invited to a papal banquet, but excused himself, for feasting was repugnant to his shy ascetic nature. This happened providentially, as his chroniclers suppose, for he was spared the horror of seeing an assassination which took place at the Pope's own table.

It was not only the quarrel with the monks which took Edmund to Rome. There were other disputes on far more weighty matters which had to be decided at the Papal Court.

One of them was his protest against the evil custom whereby the King of England interfered in ecclesiastical elections. So long as a see was vacant, the King, who treated bishops and abbots as tenants holding from the Crown, received the custody of their estates and drew the revenue, so that it was to his interest that sees and abbacies should be kept vacant as long as possible, while the Crown remained in enjoyment of the estate. Here, again, its fatal opulence became a source of danger to the English Church.

Obviously justice lay on Edmund's side in this long-standing grievance, but Pope and King

had many interests in common, and what seemed clear to him did not appear to interest the Holy Father.

Edmund had powerful adversaries ranged against him in the Papal Court ; Simon de Montfort was one, for that great noble hotly resented the Archbishop's denunciation of his marriage with Henry's sister ; Hubert de Burgh, the Justiciar of England, was another, though he was a man who owed Edmund gratitude. The law was crooked and cruel, and the Justiciar had found the Archbishop very inconvenient. It is no wonder that he came back from Rome " crest-fallen, dejected, and impoverished."

The last item in the catalogue of difficulties which beset the saint which we need dwell upon was the appointment by the Pope of Cardinal Otho, an Italian deacon, as *Legatus a latere* to England. The Pope, as we have seen, had cause to be disappointed with the complaisance of his nominee, and thought best to counter his opposition and watch over the flow of England's financial contributions to his exchequer by sending an official whose status in England was that of a quasi-pope in himself. Edmund protested against the appointment of a Legate who took precedence of him and to a great extent usurped his powers, but when protests were of no avail he met Otho at his ceremonial arrival, welcomed him, and did his best to work with him. In some matters

indeed Otho may at first have strengthened Edmund's hands, but as time went on he became a serious factor in the game of Pope and King *versus* Archbishop and the liberties of England. We hear that those whom Edmund excommunicated Otho absolved, and those whom Edmund absolved he excommunicated.

The climax in the matter came when, at the baptism of Henry's son, afterwards Edward I, Otho, though only in deacon's orders, claimed and was granted the privilege of baptising the royal infant in Westminster Abbey. Edmund of course was present amid the splendid array of notables, and administered confirmation after the christening had taken place, but he was made to feel that the Legate stood higher in the King's favour than himself. He and his office began to be held in contempt and made to look ridiculous.

There was, however, a strong body of feeling against Otho, and one thinks that Oxford must have ranged itself behind Edmund and backed the policy for which he stood.

It was Robert Bacon, a Dominican of the University, one of Edmund's pupils and biographers, who boldly denounced Peter des Roches and the Poitevins before the King at his council held at Oxford when the English nobles were so overawed by the foreigners that they absented themselves from the council. "What is the greatest danger to this realm?" asked Henry.

"*A Petris et Rupibus*," answered the intrepid Dominican, and the pun was obvious enough for everyone to understand. Grosseteste stood sturdily behind Edmund, and Grosseteste was Oxford. The way the wind blew among the students is shown by the following incident. When Otho visited Oxford in the course of his legatine mission the scholars ragged his cook, or at least displayed a good deal of irreverent curiosity in the preparation of the Legate's dinner.

The cook, an irascible Italian, said by some monastic chroniclers to have been the Cardinal's own brother, threw the contents of a boiling saucepan over one of them, who happened to be an Irishman, whereupon arrows began to fly and the poor cook was shot dead.

A riot quickly rose and the Legate fled from the city, clad in his canonical hood, to Oseney Abbey, where he locked himself in, while the University raged round the convent walls. He had to be rescued by the King's troops at dead of night, and crossed a ford near Oseney on his best horse. It took all Grosseteste's efforts to calm things down, for Otho put the whole University under an interdict, excommunicated the Chancellor, Simon de Boville, Prior of the Dominicans, and had some of the leaders of the riot imprisoned in Wallingford Castle.

The students threatened to leave Oxford in

a body, and it was some time before the end was heard of it all.

But Edmund could not meet the evils of the day with violence. The tragedy of his position was increased by the fact that the Legate of the Holy Father, by virtue of his office, commanded his reverence and respect. "The servant of the Lord shall not strive" is a precept that well expresses his convictions; even Grosseteste, who loved him, seems to have felt that he did not fight the cause of righteousness with sufficient fervour. It was not that he lacked courage. He had stepped at once into the traditional position of champion of the people's liberties, and he had hardly been consecrated a week when he threatened the King with excommunication if he would not amend his government. In the same year he accused him publicly of connivance with the murder of Richard Marshall, the leader of the barons' opposition, who was assassinated in Ireland by the agents of Peter des Roches. He held strongly that as God's representative he had authority higher than any king could wield, but he had not the temperament of a natural fighter.

Rather he knew that it becomes the servant of the Lord to suffer. "*Eadmundum doceat mors mea ne timeat*" ran the legend on his seal. It was Becket's martyrdom which pointed to him the true way to victory. He would strive till he could strive no more, yield till he could yield no

further without sin, endure to be browbeaten, humiliated, flouted, and disillusioned, and then, since Henry was no tyrant to give him the glory of martyrdom, he chose the humbler self-immolation of retirement.

He was broken in health and had not long to live. He was about a hundred thousand pounds in debt through unsuccessful lawsuits, the ruinous condition of the estate to which he had succeeded, and the machinations of the Canterbury monks.

He saw in visions the martyred St. Thomas asking "What is written on my seal?" and beckoning him to follow in his steps, and so, like Stephen Langton, St. Thomas, and St. Anselm before him, he left the country which he could not save.

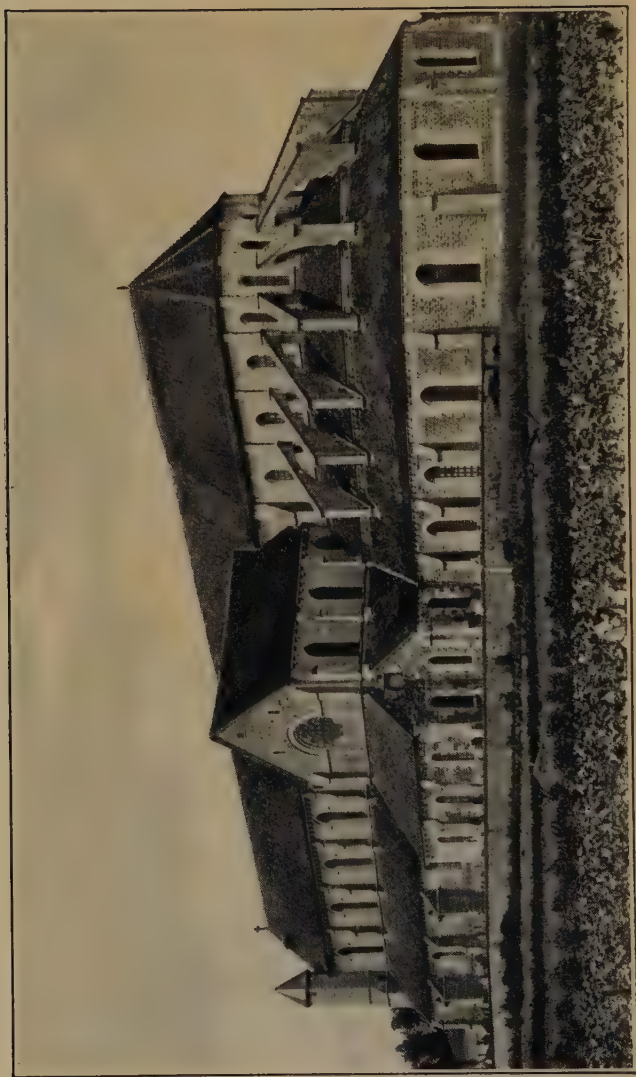
Unlike them he did not come back ; he probably knew that he was leaving England for ever, but by his death in exile and by virtue of the wave of popular emotion which that death aroused he did more for the cause which he championed than he could have accomplished by force or policy.

CHAPTER VII

EDMUND AT PONTIGNY

EDMUND left the kingdom secretly, without asking the consent of the King. On his way to the coast he consecrated Howel ap Ednyfed, Bishop-elect of St. Asaph, at the small alien Benedictine Priory of Boxgrove, near Chichester, and at some southern port took ship for Gravelines. Looking at the receding land, he wept, we are told, most bitterly, knowing in his heart that he would never see it again. He was a sick man, and though the flame of life in him seems to have flared up for a little time when he got to his haven of peace, he must have felt that he had not long to live. The date of his departure is not known, but it is fairly clear that he reached France in the last heat of summer.

With him went a small retinue of faithful attendants, some Dominican Friars—an Order to which he was much attached—his beloved chancellor Richard de la Wych, his brother Robert, the monk Eustace, who wrote of him after his death, his chamberlain Bertrand and some others.



THE ABBEY OF PONTIGNY.

facing p. 131.

The arrival of the Archbishop obviously created no small stir in France, and at Senlis, his first stopping-place after landing at Gravelines, he was met by the Lady Blanche, the Queen Mother, who brought her two sons for his blessing and offered him a place of refuge.

But Edmund would not stay. He was set on walking in the steps of St. Thomas and eager to reach Pontigny.

So to Pontigny at last he came, weary after his long journey. The Abbot, full of delight that his convent should receive yet another distinguished refugee from England, put at his disposal a house just outside the Abbey gates, showing him with pride where St. Thomas had lived in that very house, and "Dom Stephen de Langton with many of his suffragans also."

The Abbey Church of Pontigny, where St. Edmund found peace after these years of strain, remains to-day much as he knew it; indeed it is said to be unique as an instance of a Cistercian Abbey neither ruined nor rebuilt. The church was begun in 1150, being a foundation of St. Stephen Harding from Citeaux, and the severe simplicity and austere beauty of the building, colossal in its grandeur, but eloquent of the asceticism of that strict monastic order which alone among great orders had an English founder, must have been very restful and welcoming to Edmund's storm-tossed spirit. No outsiders

were ever allowed entry to a Cistercian church ; their abbeys were not open to the public like those of the unreformed Benedictines, which often served as parish churches too, and no women were admitted even to the nave. Edmund begged to be received among the white-robed brethren as a simple monk of their community; he joined in their offices and kept their fasts and feasts.

He seems to have identified himself with the monks quite seriously, for later on when his relics were being anxiously shepherded back through thronging crowds across the fields of France, the Abbot of Pontigny, on tenter-hooks till he should have seen the saint's body safe within the precincts of his convent, begged him to work no miracles which might try the cupidity of rival neighbours beyond endurance. " Good Father," he said, " seeing thou art a brother of the Church of Pontigny and owest me humble obedience if thou so deemest right, I will therefore that thou work no miracle till thou art come to the place appointed for thy burial."

However this may be, Edmund loved the life of a monastery. It was to him the most perfect refreshment, and he was only repeating at Pontigny what he had done before at Merton in Surrey and at Reading in Berkshire as a younger man.

At the urgent request of the monks he preached

one sermon to them, notes of which are extant still. Here he finished his only book, his *Speculum Ecclesiae* or *Summa Sancti Edmundi*, and spent the days in prayer and study as he loved to do. Something of his old love for mission work came back to him ; he preached in many of the neighbouring villages as he had preached in England for the crusade, he was always ready to hear confessions, and at least one mother brought her sick child for him to lay his hands upon and heal.

Long nights of prayer, study, and zeal for preaching marked his short happy sojourn in the place where he had found asylum.

But this was not for long. Edmund grew weaker and suffered much from the heat of the late summer days, so that physicians advised him to go for a few weeks to Soissy, north-east of Paris, where the air was more bracing and where a small House of Canons Regular offered him hospitality.

He journeyed there slowly with Richard de la Wych and his brother Robert, and as they passed by Coulours, seeing a House of Monks Templar, he said : " Here I will rest on my return."

But though he tried to the last to keep up his accustomed life of prayer and almsgiving, at Soissy his strength failed so quickly that it was plain that the end was near. He would not take to his bed, for he seldom if ever slept on one, but

remained sitting with his head resting on his hands.

At last they brought him the Viaticum, and he addressed our Lord as if he saw Him face to face in the Blessed Sacrament. The accounts of his last communion tell how all beholders were impressed with the beauty of his devotion and his great happiness. Three days later he received the Last Unction, and he asked for a crucifix and the images of Blessed Mary and Saint John to be placed on a table before him.

He was seen to wash with wine and water the marks of the five wounds on his crucifix, then, making the sign of the cross over these ablutions, he drank them with great devotion saying the words of Isaiah, "Ye shall draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation." His love for the image of the Crucified was notable throughout his life, and in the history of Christian devotions this practice of his was famous in the development of the cultus of the Five Wounds, which finally crystallised into devotion to the Sacred Heart, in which the spear made the chiefest of the wounds of Christ.

In his last hours his thoughts wandered to the monks of Canterbury; he revoked his sentences against them and begged their pardon for himself. He asked to be taken back to Pontigny and to be buried there.

He left to Margaret and Alice his grey cloak

of camelot, his lambswool cape and his "Tabula," a silver triptych showing the Crucifixion flanked by our Lady and the Holy Child on the one hand and the martyrdom of St. Thomas on the other. They were to build a chapel of St. Edmund at Catesby to house these precious gifts, and miracles were to take place in their presence, but such events were far from his humble thoughts. He had nothing else to leave his sisters, and they were poor religious who could accept no property if it had been his to bequeath. To Richard, "our beloved chancellor," he left his drinking-cup, "in token of the long affection in which we have held him."

His attendants lamented that they were losing not only their master but their means of livelihood and their home, for they feared the King's displeasure should they return to England. So Edmund wrote a letter to his friend the Bishop of Norwich asking him to take into his service "our dearly beloved Robert of Essex," and did his best to provide for the future of his faithful followers.

When they brought him some delicacies he refused them, being too sick to eat, and they remembered that he said with an air of pleasantry "Men seth gamen gooth on wombe, ac ich segge gamen gooth on herte." (People say fun depends on your stomach. I say fun depends on your heart.) There is nothing very amusing in

this sententious remark, but Edmund's humour is often alluded to by his biographers. We must remember that he generally talked French ; he could preach to the villagers round Pontigny quite as easily as he could at Oxford or at Bath, and French or Latin would be his medium for ordinary conversation. But here he breaks into the broad Saxon of his boyhood, perhaps with some mimicry of rustic dialect recalled from days at Abingdon. Dying among these Frenchmen, he jokes a little with his English friends and tries to make them laugh.

The end came peacefully. At midnight he asked " What hour is it ? " and they told him it was midnight. After a long interval again he said " What hour is it ? " and they said " Just before dawn." He asked again a third time, and they said " It is dawn." He then said " I commend you to God. Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit," and thereafter spoke no more. So his death is described in the Annals of Oseney Abbey. He died peacefully in his sleep, dressed in his shabby clothes and lying on the ground, on November 16 in the year of our Lord 1240.

At once in the presence of the assembled community his seal was broken. These monks felt the responsibility of the death of so great a prelate in their midst, and prudence dictated the destruction of his seal lest fraudulent documents

might be issued in his name. He had learned its lesson, "*Eadmundum doceat mors mea ne timeat*," and he needed it no more.

Since he was to be buried, as he had directed, at Pontigny, some days' journey off, his heart and internal organs were removed and buried in the Church of St. James at Provins. In view of the marvellous preservation of his relics, one would suppose that at the same time his body was carefully embalmed. It was then washed, clad in his sacred vestments, and the long journey back to Pontigny began.

They came to Coulours and its House of Templars, and there, according to his word, the body rested for the night, and so they proceeded slowly on from village to village, the cortège attracting ever larger and larger crowds as the rumour of his passing traversed the country-side. The Abbot of Pontigny hastened to meet them in an agony of suspense lest such a treasure should fail to reach his monastery safely, for fights between rival churches for the possession of a saint's relics were not uncommon at this time, and a good deal of violence attended the burial, a little later, of St. Anthony of Padua, in Italy, and the Abbot cannot have breathed freely until the sacred burden was safe within the enclosure of his monastery walls.

St. Edmund's arrival in France had caused a deep sensation ; it was a great excitement to

welcome an exiled Archbishop of the wealthy and famous province across the narrow sea. The circumstances of his long funeral procession marching for days across a hundred miles of country-side increased the popular emotion and helped to spread St. Edmund's fame, so that when the clamour for his canonisation arose appeals from Sens, Auxerre, Meaux, Senlis, Bourges, and Tours were mingled with those of his own countrymen for his official recognition as a saint. Those who supported the claim in England were the University of Oxford and the churches of York, Salisbury, Winchester, London, Chichester, Lincoln, Norwich, Rochester, Worcester, and Bath. To these were added letters from the Abbots of Westminster, Reading, and Merton and from the whole Cistercian Order in their general chapter.

Edmund died in November 1240, and in the following year the aged Pope Gregory IX died also. The next Pope, Celestine IV, lived only a few weeks, and it was Innocent IV who received the appeal in the second year of his exile from Rome at the Council of Lyons in 1245. Edmund's canonisation was proclaimed by a Papal Bull dated January 11, 1247.

Miracles were not lacking to support his claims to sanctity, and numbers of persons were healed of various diseases at his shrine, but the Abbot of Pontigny wisely said that the greatest

wonder of all was the fact that the whole world hastened to honour one who was but lately the object of the whole world's scorn and hatred. From the depositions sent in for the process of canonisation much of what we know about him has been preserved. The Church of Salisbury remembered specially his powers as a preacher. "He preached," they said, "like St. John the Baptist to mixed concourses of all kinds of people, and he lived like St. John the Baptist in his ascetic life, rough clothing and austere virginity."

Among the voices which forwarded his honour were those of Robert Grosseteste, who with the Bishop of London spoke for him at the examination held in London, the Archbishop of Armagh, afterwards Archbishop of Livonia, St. Louis IX of France, and Richard de la Wych.

The volume of enthusiasm was extraordinary. It needed to be so, for the appeal was frowned upon in high quarters by many whom Matthew Paris meaningly says "it would not be safe to name."

Henry naturally looked upon this wave of popular feeling as a rebuke to all his policy and a condemnation of his treatment of the saint; the monks of Canterbury sought to restrain by legal process any laudation of the Archbishop whom it seemed they had defeated; Otho could exercise a good deal of influence against St.

Edmund's friends and did not fail to do so ; Simon de Montfort was a formidable force to reckon with, and Boniface, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, also opposed his predecessor's canonisation.

But the conscience of Christendom was roused, and the saint's example gave courage to the popular sense of righteousness.

Edmund had indeed informally absolved the Canterbury monks, but the mere blessing of a dying man could not remove the legal disabilities of the censures under which he had been forced to place them, and it was an expensive business for the monastery to regularise their position before they could appoint Archbishop Boniface.

Within the walls of Pontigny, as he had requested, in the tall church where he had found such peace, Edmund was buried.

But they were not content to leave his relics in the grave, and even before the formal translation which his canonisation involved the monks had exhumed his body and exposed it to view.

There are many references to the fact that it was marvellously fragrant and remained incorrupt : how much of the " odour of sanctity " was due to the embalmer's art and how much to supernatural causes we need not pause to ask, but the devout minds of the thirteenth century dwelt lovingly upon the mortal relics of the saints, and what seems to us a little morbid must not

be judged by the standards of our very different civilisation.

At his first translation was present Louis IX of France, later to be called St. Louis. He came as a poor pilgrim, refusing to be distinguished from the rest of the faithful. They offered him a portion of the relics to bear with him in the voyage he was to undertake across the seas, but he refused to allow the body of the saint to be mutilated for his unworthy sake. With him came his mother, Queen Blanche, and for this great occasion leave was obtained to throw the Abbey open so that women might approach the shrine. Years afterwards Henry III of England himself was to come with his Queen to do homage to the saint whom he had so harassed in his life.

At first a plain stone sarcophagus sufficed the monastery, but not long afterwards permission to break the sumptuary rules of the Cistercian Order being obtained from the Pope himself, they replaced it by a more costly shrine "elegantly wrought of gold and precious stones."

That shrine in turn has vanished, and indeed, lovely as it must have been with all the wonders of the medieval goldsmith's art, it ill became a saint whose life was so clear a witness of the dangers which wealth brings to the Church of Christ.

His body, enshrined in a casket of a later and

a weaker age, remains intact save for the right arm, which was in early days detached and removed by the monks, probably for the veneration of female worshippers who could not be admitted to the church itself.

The memory and example of St. Edmund also abides, a stern and rather challenging reminder of the imperfections and the grievous sins which stained and still stain the purity of Christendom.

For here was a man whose character exhibits all the virtues of evangelical sanctity, kindly to a fault, genial and gentle, one who never swerved since childhood from the innocence and honesty in which his mother trained him, a man who laboured unsparingly at his duty, who loved righteousness, hated iniquity, and sought after God in prayer with an insatiable thirst of devotion. He passed his whole life in the bosom of the Catholic Church in an age of faith to which we look back with envy and wonder, yet he found nothing but enemies. That the world was not worthy of him need not surprise us, but the essential tragedy of his life is that the Church itself was not worthy of him either.

His character stands out in that age of startling contrasts—an age of which it has been said that it had all the vices except vulgarity, and all the virtues except moderation. His successor, Boniface of Savoy, was a foreigner, appointed for

no other reason save that he was the Queen's uncle, a greedy and unscrupulous prelate, incapable and unedifying.

St. Edmund tried to live a perfectly consistent life in the highest place in Christendom saving the Papacy itself, and he was killed by the opposition of the very body which he tried to serve. He shared the spirit of St. Francis, but if St. Francis himself had been Archbishop of Canterbury his fate would probably have been the same as that of Edmund Rich.

In those last days of exile and increasing bodily weakness sad visions must have passed before the dying Archbishop's eyes. The monks of Canterbury, the King, and Gregory his Pope—which of these three, we may wonder, caused the deepest heart-ache? Undoubtedly it must have been the last.

The Canterbury monks were but unruly subjects needing discipline, men under authority who could be forced to keep the holy rule which they rebelled against, provided they did not find an ally in one to whom Edmund himself was under authority.

The Archbishop was familiar with the turbulent spirits of a University, and, left to himself, he would have proved their master. The King he could face quite fearlessly, for to stand before kings and rulers in the name of his Lord was part of his conception of his great office, and to die, if

need be, in defence of his trust he would have held the highest honour. But behind King Henry stood the Pope ; there was no clear-cut issue with the hostile world, every move he might make for the cause of liberty was checkmated either by Gregory or by his legate ; he was a faithful soldier of Christ who knew that his great superior officer was working against him.

In his relations to the Pope his hands were tied ; he could never have allowed himself even in his heart to question his duty of uttermost fealty to one whom he and all his age believed to possess the powers which the Papacy had by then come to claim.

Turn where he would, the Pope stood in his way. Without the backing of the Pope he could not even subdue the contumacy of the Canterbury monks, far less could he maintain the cause of the helpless against the mingled greed and weakness of the King. The ground was cut away beneath his feet. Nor was this all. The Pope in practice proved to be not only a slack defender of the English Church against domestic enemies, but in his own person played the part of chief despoiler, careless of all that Edmund laboured to protect, concerned only about the wealth that he could extract from his English provinces.

It was that last demand of three hundred rich benefices for his Roman friends which finally broke Edmund's heart and left no other alternative

to him than resignation, and failure far more ignominious than death.

For him there was no dramatic martyrdom, no glorious witness to be borne under the leadership of the vicar of Christ on earth, but only retreat from a position which had become impossible.

Tried by the acid test of Edmund's sanctity, the Papacy as men then understood it stands condemned.

The rock on which Edmund was wrecked was still submerged beneath the surface of time, but even in the thirteenth century it did not leave sufficient depth of water to carry a saint who tried to do his duty as an English Archbishop. The causes which led to our eventual severance from Rome, though it was not yet possible for men to formulate nor realise their nature, stood solidly in Edmund's way.

But we must judge the Church by its saints rather than by that seamy side of its fabric visible on earth which we call Church history, and history itself is the best cure for pessimism.

The Church is, and must always be, perpetually at war, though the warfare takes different forms in different centuries. Also in the visible Church of Christ the evil is ever mingled with the good.

Was there ever a golden age of Church history? Certainly in the thirteenth century every part of our Church life was not made of gold. We have our own reasons for despondency

and shame to-day, but we have nothing to correspond with a Peter des Roches, nor any problem so desperate as those produced by the later medieval Papacy.

Those who still love the Church of England and sorrow for its many failures and deficiencies may well say, as they recall the past : *O passi graviora, dabit Deus hic quoque finem*, and may still take courage from the example of its saints.

APPENDIX

TRIAL BY ORDEAL

DR. EDWIN ABBOTT quotes in his book, *St. Thomas of Canterbury* (vol. ii. pp. 80–100), a contemporary account of a trial and sentence which is described incidentally in connection with one of St. Thomas's first miracles. As is often the case, the miracle is less interesting than its setting. Here it is :—"There was one of the common folk (*plebeius*) Eilward by name, in the King's town of Weston, in the county of Bedford. One of his neighbours, Fulk, owed him a *denarius* as part of rent for cornland, and put off payment on the excuse of not having the money. One day, a holiday, when they were going to the alehouse together, as is the English custom, Eilward asked for his money, and Fulk denied the debt on oath. Then Eilward bade him pay half, as he was going to have some beer, and keep the other half for himself for beer likewise. On Fulk's still refusing, the other said he would be even with him.

"After they had both got drunk, Eilward, leaving the alehouse before the other, turned aside to Fulk's cottage, tore away the bar, burst into the house, and carried away a great grindstone and a pair of gloves, both scarcely of the value of a *nummus*. The boys who were playing in the courtyard cried out, and running to the tavern called their father out to reclaim his property. Fulk followed the thief, broke the man's head with the grindstone, wounded him in the arm with a knife, brought him back to the cottage, bound him, and called in Fulk the beadle of the village, to know what he must do with his prisoner. 'The charge,' said the beadle, 'is not heavy enough. If you tie a few more things round the prisoner and produce

him thus, you can accuse him of breaking the law.' The debtor agreed, and fastened round his prisoner's neck an awl, a two-edged axe, a net and some clothes, together with the grindstone and the gloves, and on the following day brought him thus before the King's officers."

So far the crime—a muddled beery squabble between two village yokels in which spite, petty dishonesty, and debt all play their part, the kind of quarrel a modern stipendiary magistrate would deal with without much difficulty. Now for the punishment to fit the crime.

"So having been taken to Bedford, he was kept in the prison there for a month. He sent for a priest, in whose hearing (after confessing his sins) he vowed a pilgrimage to Jerusalem if he escaped, and he begged that he might be branded with a cross on the shoulder. The priest branded him accordingly" . . . and recommended that he should invoke the protection of St. Thomas. "Then he left him, saying that the judges had forbidden any priest to have further access to the accused.

"However the priest still sent messages to his window to comfort and strengthen him in secret. Also the Prior of Bedford often supplied him with food, visited him, and had him out for a breathing space, now and then, in the open air.

"At the beginning of the fifth week he was had up for trial . . . again remanded to prison. He was again tried on the charge of stealing simply the grindstone and the gloves.

"For the accuser, fearing to undergo the ordeal of battle demanded by the accused, condemned by silence all his previous charges, and—having on his side the viscount and the judges—managed to free himself from obligation to fight, and to secure that the accused should be tried by ordeal of water.

"Now it was the Sabbath, and the examination was

put off till the third day of the following week, he himself being again left in prison, and not allowed by the cruelty of his keeper to keep vigil in church—a right conceded by the compassion of religion to all that are to purge themselves by ordeal from criminal charge. . . .

“When brought out to the water, he was met by the village priest, who exhorted him to bear all patiently, looking to remission of sins, to entertain no anger in his heart, to forgive all his enemies heartily, and not to despair of the compassion of God. . . .

“When plunged into the water he was found guilty. The beadle (*praeco*) Fulk now seized him, saying ‘This way, rascal, this way!’ . . . Dragged to the place of execution, he was deprived of his eyes, and also mutilated according to law (*genitalibus mutilatur*). . . . The members of which he had been deprived by mutilation they hid under the sod . . . and ‘departed leaving him half dead.’ . . . He was mutilated by his accuser Fulk, and the official of the same name . . . and also by the other executioners with them.” The rest of the narrative tells how he was miraculously healed by St. Thomas. Dr. Abbott is inclined to think that the mutilation may have been done less efficiently than the narrative suggests, and that nature may have healed Eilward. But there does not seem any doubt that this is a true picture of King’s justice in a time only a little before St. Edmund’s day. Is it any wonder that men canonised St. Thomas, who endeavoured to secure for clerks the right of being tried by the more humane (but still severe) system of Canon Law, with written evidence, no ordeal, and some approach to civilised procedure?

HOWEL, BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH

Twice in his tenure of office as Archbishop Edmund consecrated a Bishop of St. Asaph, that mountainous and

desolate diocese beyond Offa's Dyke, in the still unconquered land of Wales.

The first was Hugh, a Franciscan Friar, whom he consecrated at Reading at the same time as Robert Grosseteste, on June 14, 1235; the second was Hugh's successor, Howel ap Ednyfed, whom he consecrated in haste at Boxgrove on his flight from England. For more than a century a persistent series of efforts had been made to bring Wales into communion with the see of Canterbury, and Wales had been annexed ecclesiastically long before it was politically subjugated. Only too often English kings thrust their own nominees upon the unwilling Welsh. The first Bishop of St. Asaph to be consecrated out of Wales was Godfrey (1153), in the reign of Henry II, who also received from the King the Abbey of Abingdon when the poverty and hostility of the Welsh forced him to desert his see. Troubles between the Welsh nobles and their bishops also provided a reason for seeking the authority of consecration in England, and Bishop Howel does not appear to have owed his preferment to English political influence. He was the son of Ednyfed Vychan, Baron of Brynffanigl and Lord of Abergele. During his time Wales was conquered by Henry III, and the Welsh bishops siding with their countrymen had their sees and churches despoiled, so that they were forced to beg their bread and live on alms. Howel died in 1247 in Oxford and was buried in Oseney Abbey, where Adam, a canon of Paris and fellow-student of Giraldus Cambrensis, Bishop of St. Asaph in 1175, was also buried (*The History of the Diocese of St. Asaph*, by the Ven. D. R. Thomas, Archdeacon of Montgomery, vol. i. pp. 214-215).

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